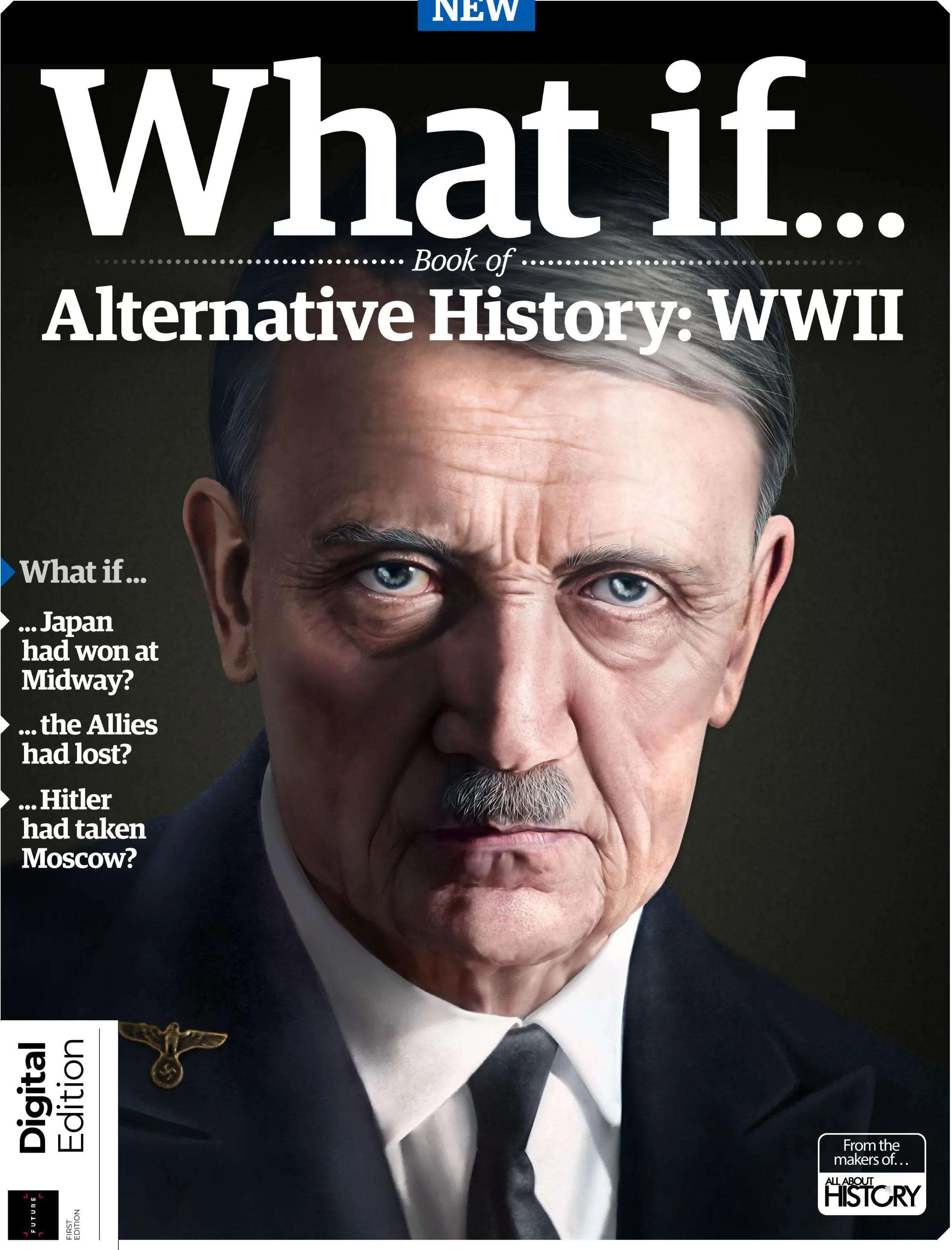
NEW

What if...

Book of

Alternative History: WWII



What if ...

- ... Japan had won at Midway?
- ... the Allies had lost?
- ... Hitler had taken Moscow?

Digital Edition

FUTURE

FIRST EDITION

From the makers of...
ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Welcome to

What if…

Book of

Alternative History: WWII

Six years of fighting, more than 50 million dead, spanning three continents and two of the world's largest oceans, and up to 70 nations involved – World War II was the biggest and bloodiest conflict the world has ever seen. We all know how things turned out in the end, but have you ever stopped to think about what might have been if key battles, decisions or events had taken a different course? In this special World War II edition of **What if… Book of Alternative History** we speak to experts to try to uncover how events may have unfolded if some of these key moments had turned out differently. Covering everything from the run-up to the war to key battles, strategic decisions and the post-war fallout, read on to find out how the world would have looked if the Allies had lost or Stalin had continued west after Berlin, what would have become of Hitler had he not committed suicide, and how a Japanese victory at Midway would have impacted the war in the Pacific. We also explore what might have happened if Churchill's Operation Unthinkable had become a reality, the impact an Allied failure on D-Day might have had on the outcome of the war and what might have been for Great Britain had Hitler gone ahead with his invasion plans, as well as what might have happened if the Allies hadn't cracked the Enigma code or the Nazis had developed the atomic bomb first. Turn the page to explore these fascinating and frightening WWII alt-history scenarios and many more.

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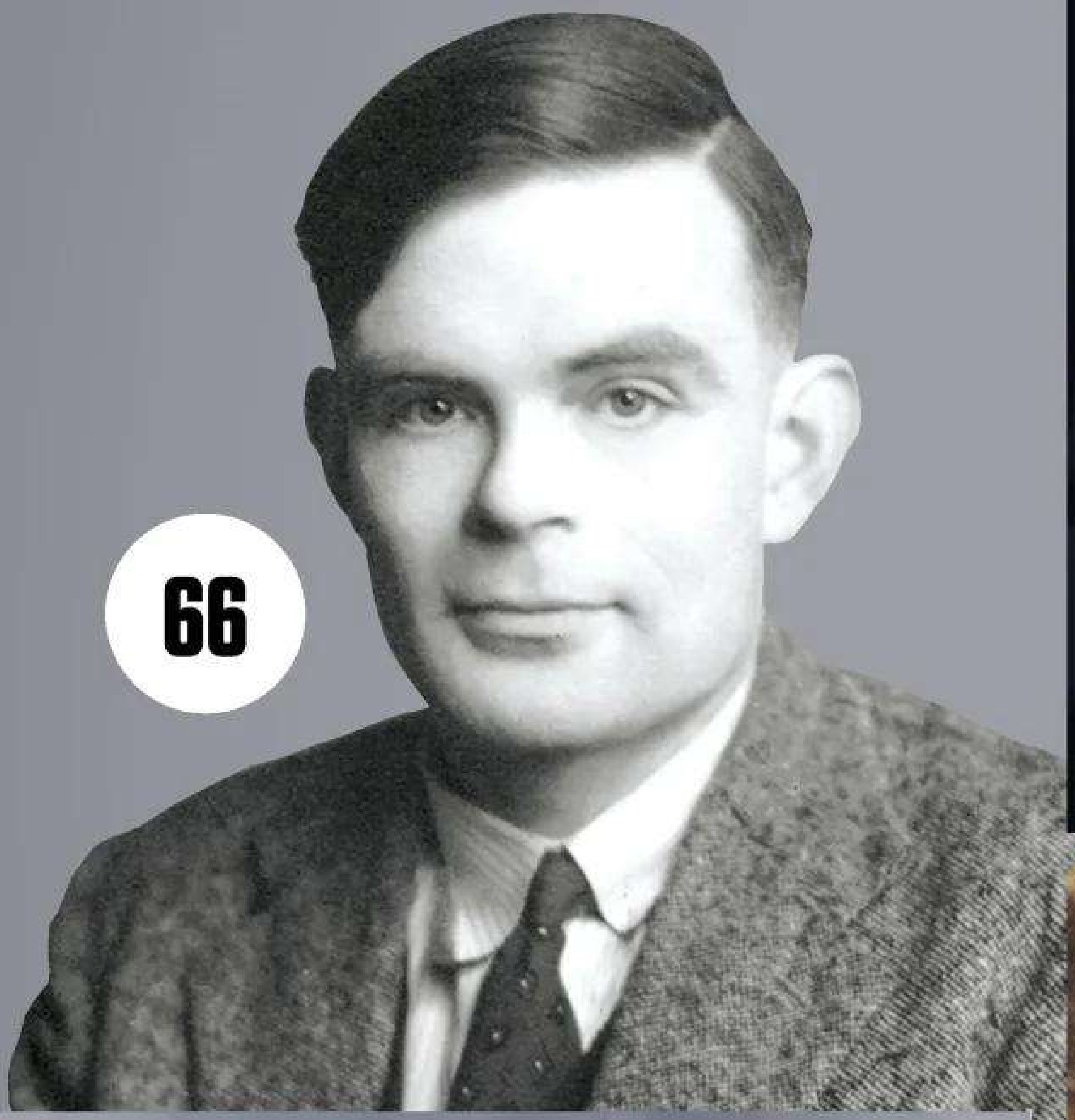

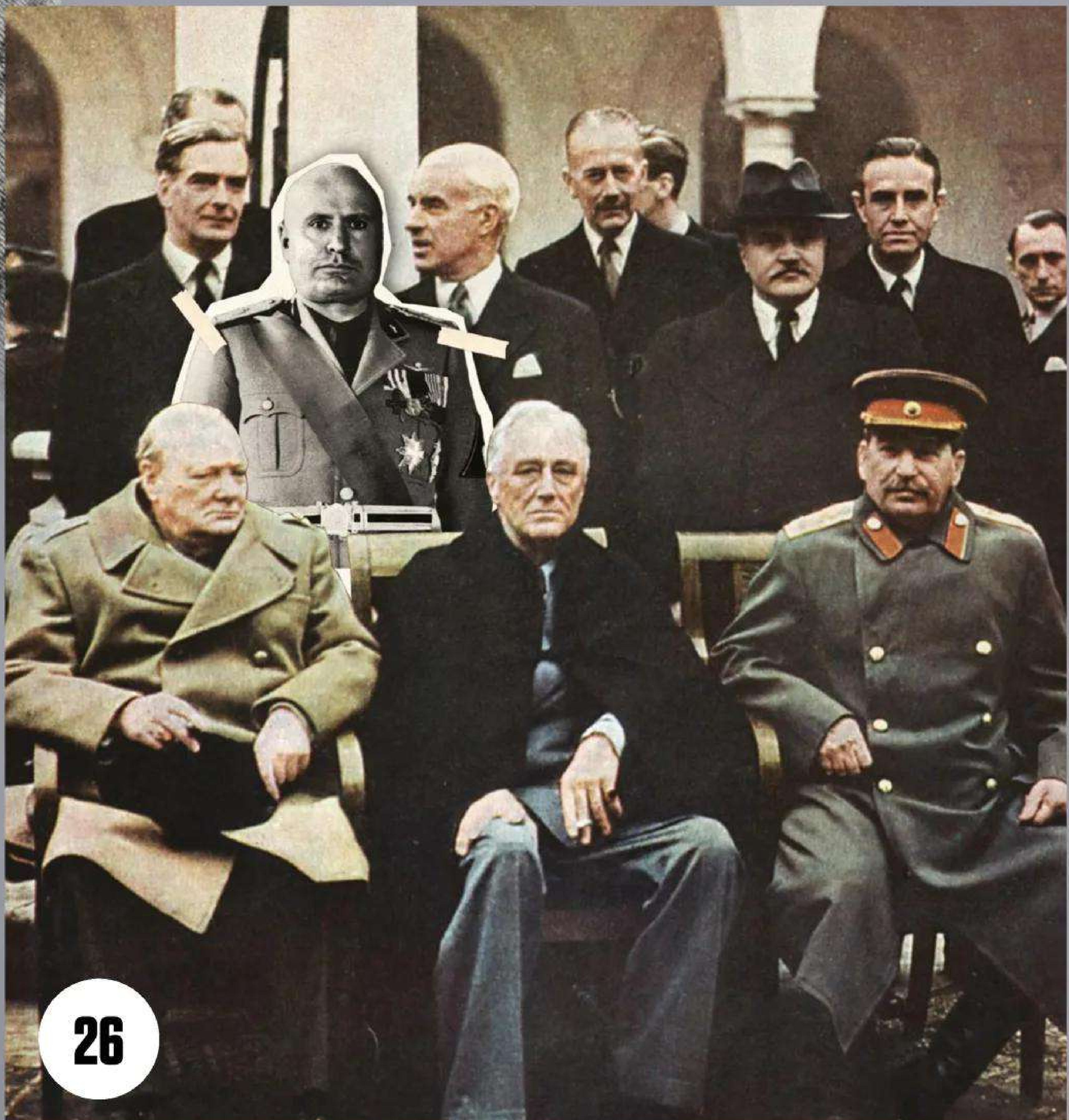

OP. KARTE CHEF
Geheime Kommandosache!
„Chefsache"!
NSDAP
DEUTSCHLAND
ERWACHE
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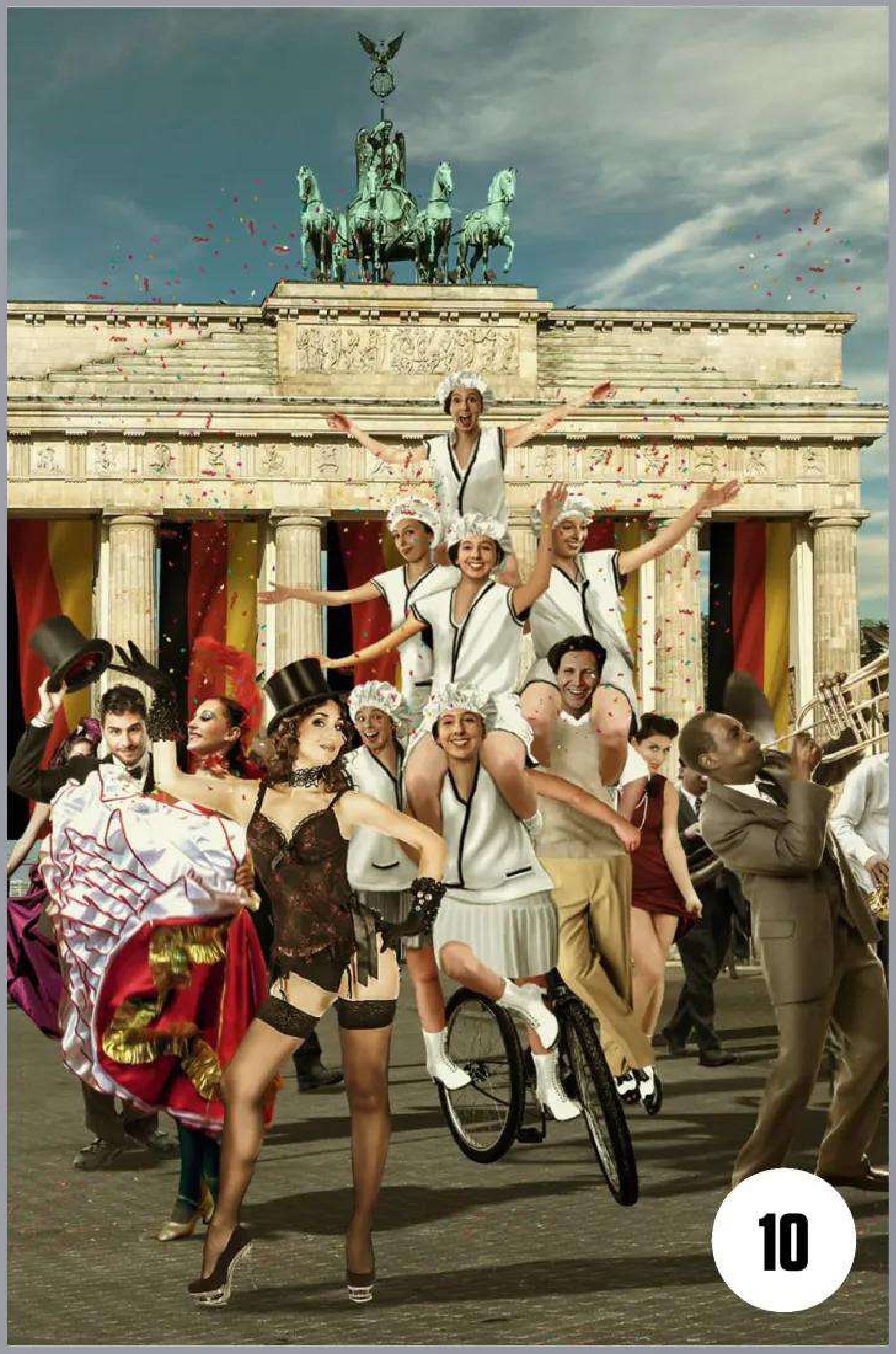

What if...

THE ALLIES HAD LOST THE WAR?

Imagine if Hitler succeeded with his dream of turning Europe into a single Nazi superpower...

INTERVIEW WITH

© Anne de Henning

Timothy W Ryback

Timothy is the internationally acclaimed author of *Hitler's Private Library*, with his most recent book, *TAKEOVER: Hitler's Final Rise to Power*, published in March 2024. His books have appeared in more than 40 editions around the world.

In 1940 Britain and France tasted defeat – and retreat – at the hands of the Nazi war machine at Dunkirk. By 1944, with the Allied forces boosted by the US and other nations, D-Day was to signal the beginning of the end for Hitler. But events could have been very different. A second pact with Russia would have released vital Nazi troops and armour to reinforce and repel the Normandy landings. Hitler may have decided to pursue the development, and use, of 'dirty' radioactive shells or even an atomic bomb. The tens of thousands of Allied troops may never have got off the beaches. With Hitler as the Master of Europe, what would happen next?

What could have happened differently in order to bring about an Allied defeat?

Following the German defeats at El Alamein in late 1942, Stalingrad in early 1943, and the Allied landings at Normandy in June 1944, the most credible scenario for a Hitler victory would have been a nuclear device similar to the atomic bomb dropped by the Americans on Hiroshima. Strategically, the most probable target for Hitler would have been Moscow or a major East Coast city in the United States.

By then, Hitler possessed the long-range capacity to deliver such a bomb as far as New York City. He had three prototypes of an enhanced Messerschmitt Me 264 that had been developed as part of an Amerikabomber programme. There was also a two-stage V-2 rocket in development that could have essentially functioned as an intercontinental ballistic missile. A surviving blueprint for an Uranbombe, or Uranian Bomb, from the German nuclear programme shows a device with a plutonium core.

There has been much debate as to how close German physicists were to making an atomic bomb. It is clear that German physicists were years behind the Americans in terms of development. Less certain is whether this was due to lack of competency on the part of German physicists or whether it involved intentional efforts to keep a nuclear device out of Hitler's hands. After the war, Werner Heisenberg claimed to have intentionally sought to slow-foot the development of German nuclear capacity during a meeting with Hitler. "I did not want the Führer to get so interested that he would order great efforts immediately to make the atomic bomb," he said.

What would have been Hitler's and Japan's next move?

Hitler's first move following a German victory in Europe would have been the eradication of any future threat by Soviet Bolshevism. Along with his ranting about alleged Jewish conspiracies, Hitler saw communism as an epochal threat and claimed that without Operation Barbarossa, his invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, "the fate of Europe and its thousands of years of civilisation would have found its end". Depending on post-war German relations with Britain and the US, Hitler may have enlisted the former adversaries in a joint effort to crush the Red Army, an idea entertained by both sides. Hitler would have, in any event, sought to eliminate the Soviet Union as a political or military threat and to eradicate communism as an ideology.

Baumhängen als Strafverschärfung im KZ

© Alamy, Getty Images

RIGHT The Slavic people would have suffered terribly under a dominant Nazi State

Arabian
Hadiyah
Medina
Riyadh
SAUDI
ARABI
Yanbu
Kumda
Jizan
Sa'dah
ERITREA

THE PAST

1939-1940

TWO-FACED DIPLOMACY

Following Hitler's appeasement by the British Government he is free to begin his annexation of territory unchallenged. Poland becomes the eventual line in the sand for the Allies, but Hitler is bolstered by his non-aggression pact with Stalin and ignores them anyway. Despite all efforts to the contrary, Prime Minister Chamberlain has no choice but to declare war on Germany. The British Expeditionary Force supports its French allies, but is poorly supplied and overstretched. The retreat to Dunkirk under the weight of German forces leaves the Nazis in full control of the continent.

1941

STEPPING FROM THE SHADOWS

The USA had followed a policy of Lend-Lease to supply the Allies without officially entering the war. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, that option faded and with Hitler's declaration of war on the US in December, the decision was made. Fighting in the Pacific is long and hard won as the US gradually gains victories and territory, edging ever closer to the Japanese mainland. In Europe it is a battle of the air and the sea, of intelligence and covert operations, all the while planning and preparing for the time when Allied boots will once again step onto French soil.

1944-45

THE LONG ROAD TO THE END

The D-Day landings of June 1944 trigger the liberation of Europe from Nazi control. By August Paris is free. December sees the last German offensive on the Western Front – the Battle of the Bulge – but by January the Germans are in retreat. In February, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin meet at Yalta. The Soviets are given Eastern Europe. By April, with Allied forces advancing from the west and Russians encircling Berlin, Hitler poisons his mistress Eva Braun and shoots himself. Their bodies are burned. On 7 May 1945, General Dwight Eisenhower accepts Germany's unconditional surrender. At midnight, 8 May 1945, the war in Europe is officially over.

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As for Japan? It's fair to say that Germany and Japan were uneasy allies at best. It was an axis of evil unlikely to endure. Hitler faulted Japan for not opening a front against the Soviet Union in the Far East, which would have forced Moscow into a two-front war and relieved pressure on Germany's Eastern Front. There would ultimately have been territorial disputes between the two countries, as evidenced at a Yalta-style conference in July 1942, at which plans were discussed for dividing the post-war world between the German and Japanese empires. When the Japanese proposed a demarcation line along the 70th longitude, basically ceding most of the Indian subcontinent to Japan, the Germans balked.

German and Japanese ambitions would have competed, and inevitably collided. Let antecedent serve as evidence. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact provided for the joint German-Soviet invasion of Poland in August 1939. In less than two years, Germany was at war with Russia.

If the Allies had lost, how different would Europe have looked, both geographically and politically?
A major campaign promise of Hitler's during his rise to power was the dismantling of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Germany would have been restored to its pre-Versailles borders, with additional territories annexed in Eastern Europe for further expansion and settlement by ethnic Germans to meet Hitler's policy goal of more Lebensraum, or living space, for the German people.

Most countries in Western Europe would have continued to function exactly as they did when under Nazi occupation, with puppet governments subservient to the dictates of the Reich. However, much of Eastern Europe would have been transformed into administrative regions, on the model of Poland, which ceased to exist as a country and was ruled as 'General Government'.

BELOW
There was no obvious successor after Hitler following a Nazi victory

Germany would have come to occupy the territorial boundaries framed in the 19th-century nationalistic anthem, 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles', along with additional annexed lands. This would mean that the reconstituted German Reich would have dwarfed every other country on the continent.

How would different ethnic and religious groups have been affected?
In the novel *Fatherland*, Robert Harris provides a chillingly credible account of the fate of the Jewish population in Europe if Hitler had triumphed in World War II. The Holocaust would have been completed. The physical evidence would have been eradicated. The memory would have been erased from human memory.

A similar fate would have befallen the Roma communities across Europe. There may have been a degree of demographic engineering through eugenics programmes, as with the Lebensborn children who were bred as pure Aryans, but for the most part the populations of Western European countries would not have changed significantly. In contrast, the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe, whom Hitler classified as Untermenschen, or members of an inferior race, would have been subjugated to serve the German master race.

Religious groups, especially Roman Catholics, would have come under increasing persecution. Hitler felt that religion provided an important moral support for many people in times of travail and peril. Hitler himself was Catholic but fully intended to leave the Church in a public manner after the war. "This act was to have symbolic value for the world," Hitler's private secretary, Christa Schröder, recalls him telling her. "For Germany it was intended to represent the end of an historical epoch and for the Third Reich the beginning of a new era."

What kind of concessions could the Allies have tried to negotiate when faced with defeat?
As I show in my new book, *TAKEOVER: Hitler's Final Rise to Power*, Hitler was a scorched-earth political leader. With nuclear capacity, he would have accepted nothing short of unconditional surrender from the Allies. And his terms would have been brutal. His policies in the East would

have reflected those that the Morgenthau Plan proposed for Germany – a region stripped of industrial capacity and real political autonomy, with a people who were reduced to basic agrarian life at a subsistence-level existence.

As has already been mentioned, if there had been a negotiated end to the war, Hitler could have appealed to the British – and possibly the Americans – to join forces for the purpose of confronting and driving back the Red Army forces from central Europe. It was an idea that was embraced and advocated by General Patton, who had great respect for German military capacities.

Hitler would certainly have welcomed the opportunity to cooperate with the British as an imperial power and colonial ruler. He saw the British Empire as a model for the exercise of colonial power, especially in the brutality with which it suppressed insurrections and exploited the natural resources and physical labour of colonialised peoples. Beyond reclaiming former German colonies in Africa, which were lost after World War I, Hitler could have sought to negotiate the expansion of the German colonial presence by annexing holdings of other European colonial powers, especially when it came to the regions that were rich in resources.

How would the global balance of power and relationship and reputation of the Allies be changed, and do you think that World War III would have been inevitable?
In keeping with that age-old verity, history is written by the victor – the reputations and legacies of the individual Allied nations would be dependent on their relationship to the German Reich and Hitler's personal proclivities and whims. The Soviet Union would be a ravaged and brutalised rump state most likely relegated to lands beyond the Urals. The 'Free France' of Charles de Gaulle would vanish in oblivion with the fascist French state of Marshal Petain representing the French. The United States would have been held singularly responsible for driving the Europeans into war with one another. World War II would then come to be remembered as 'Roosevelt's war'.

Great Britain may well have fared better. As already mentioned, Hitler saw the British nation as a natural ally and the British Empire as a model for world domination. It is easy to imagine a parsing and parcelling of colonial holdings and their respective resources among these two global powers.

As for a third world war? If anything, there would most likely be a German civil war that would result from a succession for power following Hitler's eventual death, possibly a battle between Waffen-SS divisions and Wehrmacht regulars, in a struggle for power between competing political and military interests. Hitler nurtured no real successor. Indeed, he fostered rivalries and competition among his top lieutenants, and alienated much of the professional military. The fissures became evident in the final days before Hitler's suicide in April 1945, when senior Hitler lieutenants, most prominently Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler, scrambled about trying to secure a successor role even as the Third Reich was collapsing in ruin.

BELOW
With Hitler dead the Germans signed an unconditional surrender

THE POSSIBILITY

1945 ONWARDS

SINGLE-STATE SOLUTION

Having kept any counteroffensive by the Allies at bay, Hitler would be able to realise his vision of a much larger German empire, both in Europe and across the world. Colonies of a conquered France and Belgium would yield their wealth of resources, helping to support a single Nazi State. And to consolidate his political position, Hitler may even look to the empire he admires the most – the British – to enter into some form of dialogue around trade. Although some nations may still retain their name, they would be mere puppets of the Nazi regime, with assemblies and officials picked, and controlled, by the Reich.

1945-50

SLAUGHTER OF THE SLAVS

With free rein, Hitler would impose the harshest treatment possible on the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe and Russia, even to the point of extinction. By regarding them as less than human, Hitler would wipe them from the face of the Earth, and reduce the might of Russia. His unopposed oppression of an entire people would stamp his own brand of stability against insurrection, while at the same time plundering the mineral and agricultural wealth of the land to feed the needs of his new Nazi idyll.

1945 ONWARDS

FRACTURE OF THE FATHERLAND

A supreme Nazi state with almost messianic propaganda centred on himself, Hitler had done very little regarding what might come after him. The very future of its dominance in Europe, like any nation, would depend on its ability to adapt and survive change. When Hitler dies, the real test as to how deep his influence had penetrated into the lives and souls of the German people would begin. Having continually used division and uncertainty to control those around him, a natural successor would not be clear. And given the opportunity, differing political factions would rise to the surface and turn on each other. The result, civil war, and the break-up of the Reich; something the Allies had failed to do.

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What if...

THE NAZIS HAD NEVER GAINED POWER?

During the interwar years, Germany faced numerous crises but it was defined by progressive leadership and Hitler's rise was not guaranteed

INTERVIEW WITH

Eric Weitz

Distinguished Professor of History at The City College of New York. Eric Weitz is also the author of *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* as well as *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State.*

How was Germany run after Kaiser Wilhelm II was overthrown?

In the last weeks of [World War I], a popular revolution began with sailors in the port of Kiel and it spread to industrial cities, then throughout the country. Throughout the winter of 1918 a revolution unfolds in Germany and like all revolutions it was very contested. On the radical end were workers, who established workers councils – soviets – in the factories and this spread even to artistic realms, in theatres, and all through the country.

They were demanding a kind of radical democracy. Not really Bolshevik communism, but some kind of system in which workers would at least have influence over the economy. But the more moderate socialists, who were deathly afraid of 'Bolshevik chaos' as they called it, moved quickly to establish a parliamentary democracy.

The Social Democratic Party – the same party that we have today in Germany – in alliance with the liberal [German Democratic Party] and the Catholic Centre Party formed the Weimar Coalition. Their coalition prevailed at the election of January 1919 and then they empanelled a constitutional convention, which appointed a committee, that met in Weimar because of the civil war raging in Berlin. They drafted a constitution in summer 1919 and on that basis the Weimar Republic was created. This lasted until 30 January 1933, when Hitler was named chancellor.

What was life like in 1920s Berlin?

There was most definitely a lot going on. It was both tumultuous and crisis ridden, but at the same time, it was one of the most creative eras of the 20th century. Perhaps there is a relationship between the two – we can never prove it – but the fragility of the political order, I think, contributed to the kind of artistic ferment that is still with us today. Particularly in the cities – Berlin of course was the centre – there was vital artistic experimentation going on.

Here we have the creation of artistic modernism; expressionism in painting and theatre; very creative film, the new popular medium of the 1920s; radio, also. Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* – all of these incredibly innovative and creative works emerged in the [Weimar Republic].

There was a lively cabaret scene, again in the cities, a very lively public life with people out in the streets. They were having very open discussions about sexuality.

I sometimes laugh to myself when people in the United States say discussing sexuality is so new, when Germans were having them in the 1920s.

So it was very socially progressive?

Quite vibrantly so! There were discussions about homosexuality and pressures to reform Germany's highly restrictive abortion law. They also set up public health clinics that offered counselling about sex. The Weimar constitution was probably the most democratic constitution anywhere in the world in the 1920s. Proportional representation, which ultimately contributed to the paralysis of the political system, was far more democratic than the American system of winner-takes-all. The security services sometimes responded brutally to public demonstrations, but in general there was a lively free press and freedom of assembly.

Jewish life also flourished – another sign of openness. There was still prejudice and

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RIGHT
In the wake of the 1918-19 German Revolution, political factions vied for power

> “Jewish life also flourished – another sign of openness”

areas like the Officer Corps were closed off to Jews. But it was possible for Jews to get university professorships.

How did right-wing groups such as the Nazi Party gain ground?
In the early 1920s, you have literally hundreds of extreme right-wing organisations. Many of them were very small and local, but troublesome. These right-wing groups were by and large demobilised soldiers, let go under the armistice conditions and the final Versailles Peace Treaty.

These demobilised soldiers were aghast at the prevalence of socialists and communists in public spaces and leading government – as well as Jews in high-level positions. In 1919 the Jewish social democratic chancellor of Bavaria, Kurt Eisner, was assassinated. In 1922 the Jewish banker and intellectual, foreign minister Walter Rathenau was killed. So there was a lot of right-wing terrorism going on, carried out by these small groups. The Nazis eventually unified these groups under the Nazi Party – that was one of their first accomplishments. In 1923, when hyperinflation completely disrupted economic and social life, these right-wing groups grew in size and the Nazis made their first attempt to seize power [in the failed Munich Beer Hall Putsch].

So after the hyperinflation in 1923, was the Nazi Party's rise inevitable?
Actually, between 1924-29, the so-called 'golden years' of the Weimar Republic, there was a move back to the political centre. You see it in the elections of 1928 when both the extreme right and extreme left lose significant support. The Nazis in 1928 are a small party, they're a police problem, but they're not really a political threat. Hitler has been banned from speaking in many of the German states. They're really nowhere until 1929 when the Great Depression hits and that then gives wind – I mean a thunderstorm, a hurricane force of wind – to the Nazi sails. But even in the 1930 elections, the Nazis got slaughtered with only 18 per cent of the vote. It was a shock. The highest vote they would get in popular election was 37.4 per cent in July 1932. Now that's a large chunk to be sure, but it's not a majority and that's significant because they never had a majority. You know, before the Third Reich, they never had a majority of popular support.

If the Nazis were polling so badly, how did Hitler become Chancellor of Germany in 1933?
There is a popular understanding that the German people let Hitler into power, but that's absolutely wrong. So all through 1932 whilst the economy keeps falling, the political system has completely fragmented. There are three major elections in the course of 1932, two parliamentary elections and one presidential election. The biggest electoral turnout the Nazi Party gets is 37.4 per cent. In November 1932 they lose again and this time are down to 32 per cent. There is discontent within the Nazi Party about Hitler's leadership, and I think it is

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates
Following the Kiel Mutiny, a revolution spreads through Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II is forced to abdicate and the Weimar Republic emerges.
9 November 1918

The Great Depression
Reliant on American loans under the Dawes Plan, the Wall Street Crash has a devastating effect on Germany. Politicians struggle to find a meaningful solution.
29 October 1929

Political chaos
Three governments collapse in Germany in 1932, with Chancellor Brüning resigning, Franz von Papen failing to win votes and Schleicher's regime lasting two months.
1932

Hitler appointed Chancellor
On the advice of Franz von Papen and several colleagues, President Hindenburg abandons his opposition to Adolf Hitler and appoints him as the new Chancellor of Germany.
30 January 1933

Hitler given new powers
The German parliament – controlled by a Nazi coalition with other right-wing parties – votes to make itself redundant passing the Enabling Act, allowing Hitler to rule by decree alone.
23 March 1933

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

The Nazi Party collapses
Though the Nazis were the largest party in the fractured parliament, they still only had 33 per cent of the vote. Dissatisfied with Hitler's leadership, an attempted coup leads to a schism and ultimately the dissolution of the party.
1933

Chancellor Papen returns
With Hitler no longer a tenable option for chancellor and limited alternatives, President Hindenburg appoints his old friend Franz von Papen to the post once again.
30 January 1933

possible to imagine the dissolution of the party.

However, in the end, in January 1933 a group of alpha men, bankers, army officers, high public servants – including Franz Von Papen, Kurt Von Schleicher and the president's own son, Oskar von Hindenburg – prevail upon Hindenburg to name Hitler chancellor. So in the very end it's a small group of powerful men around the president who are responsible for the Nazis coming to power.

Why did these figures want to help Hitler?

Their motives were to destroy the republic and replace it with some kind of conservative authoritarian system and to overthrow the Versailles Peace Treaty so that Germany could become a great power again. Basically you have a coalition of interests between older more traditional conservatives and the Nazis. Each side is using the other, but the conservatives find that they cannot actually contain the Nazis. Not at all.

If the Nazis had dissolved or Hindenburg had maintained his opposition to Hitler, could the Weimar Republic have survived?

The optimistic assessment would be that the Weimar coalition parties would gradually win more support, people would come back to the centre and you would have a viable social democratic parliamentary government, as we were getting in Sweden in the same period in the 1930s.

But when the Great Depression comes, it hit Germany so fast and it affects them more than any other place. At the same time, the Social Democrats were exhausted and the political system fragments and becomes essentially unworkable. Even before the Nazis seize power, the president signed emergency orders to issue budgets, to pursue his deflationary policy that only worsened the economy.

In either scenario, without Hitler, was World War II still inevitable?

I think World War II was inevitable when the Nazis came to power, but I don't think it would have been with a conservative group in power. It would have still been a nasty military dictatorship probably, but they would have been far more cautious. We know that because the conservatives thought Hitler was too radical with his moves into the Rhineland in 1936, and Czechoslovakia in 1938 – they're much more cautious and don't support those measures.

OPPOSITE
The Weimar Republic's vibrant nightlife inspired the movie *Cabaret*

ABOVE
Money became worthless during Germany's 1923 hyperinflation crisis

LEFT
Hitler united Germany's various far-right groups under a single banner

Night of the Long Knives
In a bloody purge of the SA leadership and Hitler's political rivals, Papen narrowly escapes with his life.
30 June 1934

Nuremburg Laws
Hitler announces new measures that establish apartheid in Germany, with Jews losing their civil rights and becoming second-class citizens.
15 September 1935

Reoccupying the Rhineland
Hitler marchs 20,000 German troops into the Rhineland, directly contravening the Treaty of Versailles.
7 March 1936

Buchenwald opens
SS authorities open the Buchenwald concentration camp. The following year, almost 10,000 Jews were sent here.
16 July 1937

Kristallnacht pogrom
Joseph Goebbels leads an attack against German and Austrian Jews, which is called the 'Night of the Broken Glass' after the devastation it causes, including piles of smashed shop windows.
9 November 1938

World War II declared
Following the invasion of Poland two days before and Hitler's refusal to withdraw, Britain and France declare war on Nazi Germany.
3 September 1939

Reichstag Fire
When Van der Lubbe is charged with burning down the Reichstag building Papen seizes on this opportunity, arresting communist leaders.
27 February 1933

Election victory
With widespread anti-communist feeling and votes from former Nazi supporters, Papen's Centre Party wins at a general election.
5 March 1933

Authoritarian democracy
With a mandate to govern, Papen passes ultra-conservative laws and perhaps even seeks to reform the constitution.
1934

Military dictatorship
Advocating the seizure of power as early as November 1932, Papen exploits Hindenburg's death to combine the chancellorship and presidency.
2 August 1934

Renegotiate Versailles
While Papen would not risk starting a war, he would strengthen the military to force Britain and France back to the negotiating table.
1936

Peace for our time?
War-weary Britain and France allow Germany to annex Czechoslovakia in return for Papen de-escalating his military build up.
1938

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What if...

LORD HALIFAX BECAME PRIME MINISTER?

Often named as one of the 'architects of appeasement', what could his premiership have meant for Britain's role in World War II?

INTERVIEW WITH

© King's College London

Professor Joe Maiolo

Professor Joe Maiolo is a historian of International Politics at King's College London. He is the author of *Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War, 1931-41* and is currently completing a book on the war's origins for Cambridge University Press.

Unlike any other British prime minister, Winston Churchill's wartime premiership is legendary and he himself has become an almost mythical figure. It may come as some surprise, then, that Churchill was not the first choice to be Neville Chamberlain's successor when he resigned in May 1940. The favourite was Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, more commonly known as Lord Halifax. Wood was a key figure during the late 1930s as Britain geared up for war with Nazi Germany. Often considered one of the architects of appeasement, this has made historians wonder as to what could have happened had it been Halifax in 10 Downing Street and not the British Bulldog himself, Churchill. Here, historian Joe Maiolo discusses Halifax's role in appeasement as well as what his premiership could have looked like.

Who was Lord Halifax?

The title 'Lord' is a giveaway. He came from an aristocratic English family with a long history of public service. He was educated at Oxford and perhaps should never have left. He's an intensely cerebral character and could have been an Oxford don, but instead became a Conservative MP and was elected for the first time in 1910. During World War I he served in France. That sums up his background but when you get down to who Lord Halifax was, the photographs of him really capture the character. He was a very tall slender man with a large head. This is a picture of a man who puts his rationality before his emotions.

Can you briefly explain the notion of appeasement?

Appeasement now is commonly used pejoratively to describe a foreign policy of surrendering to threats. No one wants to be an appeaser, nobody wants to be Neville Chamberlain, everybody wants to be Winston Churchill. Lord Halifax is usually associated with Chamberlain as one of the architects of appeasement in the 1930s. At the time all the word really meant was to pacify a difficult political situation – a wish to appease Europe, to bring about peace after WWI. Now what appeasement meant for Chamberlain and Halifax was a strategy of diplomacy and deterrence. In 1934 a very important British defence committee identified Germany as Britain's ultimate potential enemy, and put a five-year timeline for rearmament to be ready for war. There was no misapprehension that there might be a war in Europe and that Germany might be the principal enemy. In the 1930s the question for British officials was, how to deter Germany? Chamberlain, when he was chancellor of the exchequer in the early 1930s, poured money into the Royal Air Force to threaten Germany. This deterrent was meant to force Germany to the negotiating table. Appeasement ultimately failed because Adolf Hitler could not be deterred, but it was a strategy nonetheless.

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RIGHT
Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference. How might Halifax have dealt with such an event?

Main image sources: © Alamy, © Getty Images

LORD HALIFAX BECAME PRIME MINISTER?

"LET US
GO FORWARD
TOGETHER"

THE PAST

1916-18

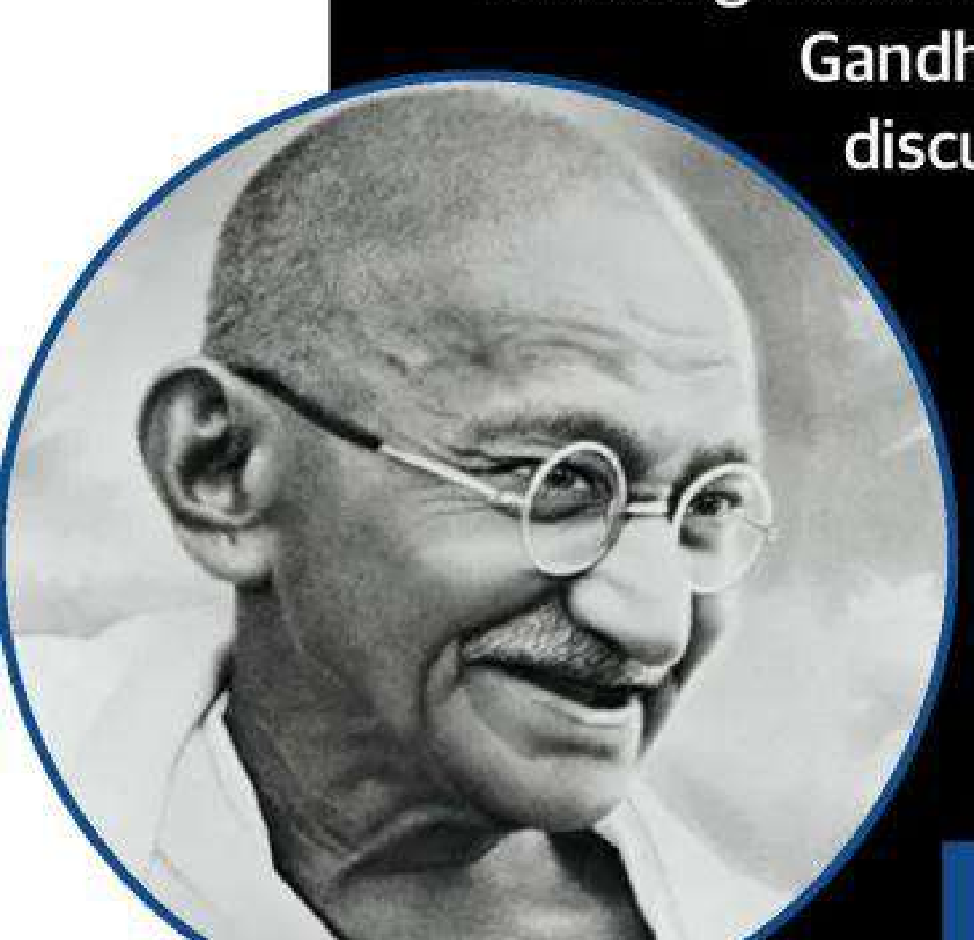
HALIFAX IN WWI

He managed to avoid being involved in the front lines of World War I until 1916 as a captain in the Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons. Halifax was surprised to find himself mentioned in dispatches of January 1917, proclaiming: "Heaven knows what for!" For the remainder of the war he was employed as deputy director of the supply department in the Ministry of National Service.

1925-29

HALIFAX IN INDIA

As viceroy of India, Halifax's devout Christianity is credited as one of the reasons why he had a good understanding with Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi. The pact the two created was a result of a period of civil disobedience, which had begun in March 1930 with the Salt March. The march was a response to the heavy salt tax imposed by British Imperial rule, as well as limitations on who could collect or sell salt. At the end of the march some 60,000 individuals had been arrested, including Gandhi himself. Halifax met with Gandhi and as a result of their discussions some compromises were agreed. Gandhi, as a representative of the Indian National Congress, then attended the Second Round Table Conference in London.



1938

PEACE FOR OUR TIME

Frequently misquoted as 'peace in our time', the famous speech by Neville Chamberlain made on 30 September 1938 was a response to his having signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. Chamberlain had attended the Munich Conference where Germany, France, Italy and Britain had agreed upon the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain also wanted Hitler's signature on the Anglo-German declaration, seen by him as a potential guarantee of peace. However, Chamberlain stated Hitler was, "without question the most detestable and bigoted man with whom it had been his lot to do business."

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What exactly was Halifax's role in appeasement and Chamberlain's government?

When historians look at appeasement and at the role of Halifax, they tend to see the relationship with Germany in isolation and not in connection to his time as viceroy of India. After World War I, the legitimacy of empire was in question. In India, there was a movement for India to become a sovereign nation. Halifax met that challenge to British rule politically and he was praised for his negotiation with [Indian independence campaigner] Gandhi. Halifax understood that there were forces pulling apart the British Empire in every direction and that it had to be defended through diplomacy.

In the late 1930s Halifax was in Chamberlain's government as foreign secretary. His visit to Germany in November 1937 was an attempt to discover what the Nazis wanted. Did Hitler want to make Germany another great European power again? Or did he want domination and the mastery of all Europe? At the time that was an open question. Halifax listened to German moderates, those who told him that all they wanted was for Germany to be a European great power again. Halifax therefore supported efforts to integrate Germany into the European states system. But after the September 1938 Czechoslovakia crisis, something changed fundamentally in the relationship between Halifax and Chamberlain. Halifax effectively said: 'No more Munichs for me'. In other words, he agreed that appeasement as a strategy made sense but there was also something unseemly about the British prime minister flying to Germany to negotiate the carve up of Czechoslovakia with Hitler. For someone who had a deep sense of the power of the British Empire, this was too much. After November 1938 Halifax's version of appeasement emphasised deterrence over negotiation.

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ABOVE
Britain's War Cabinet in November 1939. Halifax is at the front on the far left

BELOW
Lord Halifax with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain visiting Paris by boat in 1938. Would Halifax have made a superior prime minister?

What was Halifax's view on a potential war with Germany and his role in the Phoney War?

Britain and France declared war on Germany in September 1939. Up until the spring of 1940 you get a period of relative military inaction called 'the Phoney War'. Some have argued that the Phoney War was a continuation of appeasement, that Britain and France did little fighting because they wanted a peace deal with Hitler. I don't think that's right. If elements inside Germany had toppled Hitler it is possible that Chamberlain and Halifax might have made a deal with a new government, but what that would have meant for Poland is difficult to imagine. However, the key point is that the Phoney War wasn't a continuation of appeasement. The French and British believed that they could defeat Germany in a long war. For France the campaign in May-June 1940 turned out to be very brief. But that German victory didn't change the fundamentals. You can knock France out of the war, but the Soviet Union, the British Empire, and parts of the French Empire continued to fight on. The United States was arming and would support Britain. What was Halifax's view of the war? To win it, but to win it without destroying the British Empire. In the end that proved impossible.

How likely is it that Halifax could have become prime minister instead of Churchill?

Was it plausible that Halifax could have been prime minister? Absolutely. On the Labour benches there were some who wanted him to be prime minister; he seemed to be someone who could work within the apparatus of the state. He also wasn't an overpowering personality. The two big political personalities of this era were Chamberlain, who was generally disliked for his arrogance, and Churchill, who was a larger-than-life character who also often outraged his colleagues. As a prime minister, Halifax would have been a compromise between those two overpowering figures. He was regarded as extremely competent and even-tempered. But even though he had his supporters he didn't want to be prime minister, he knew this was not a role for him. He knew his limitations and this kind of soul-searching was a pattern in his political life. He had been very reluctant to become viceroy of India and he wasn't certain about becoming foreign secretary. He knew his limits. He knew he was not the right person to become a wartime prime minister.

Had Halifax been prime minister would he have tried to negotiate peace in May 1940?

Let's suppose for a moment that Halifax was somehow convinced to become prime minister in 1940, and events unfold as they did: a catastrophic defeat in France in May 1940. The German armies break through the Ardennes, it's a military, political and diplomatic crisis. What would Halifax have done? Probably nothing very different from what the British government in fact did do. I think as prime minister Halfax would have been a bit more sensitive to the threat of air power and the threat of bombing. He may have investigated some diplomatic alternatives more thoroughly in cabinet discussions, like supporting the French to seek negotiations with Germany, but the war machine was in full swing. The British Empire was mobilising for total war. The war was becoming global and Britain could mobilise the power to win it. Lord Halifax, the former viceroy of India, understood that.

Avoiding the war, what sort of policies would Halifax have tried to implement internally?

I think they would have been within the norms of the Conservative Party of the 1920s. Perhaps also a return to free trade, the breakdown of imperial preferences which had been introduced during the Great Depression. But this question takes us back to why Halifax didn't want to be prime minister. I think he felt out of place in the mid-20th century – he belonged to an earlier time, a 19th century world of empire aristocracy and social deference. After the war, Churchill invited him to join his shadow cabinet, but Halifax turned him down and retired from party politics. Halifax always had a good sense of his limitations and knew he was out of step with the politics of post-war Britain.

ABOVE
Lord Halifax pictured with Winston Churchill in Downing Street in 1940

Compared to Churchill, do you personally think he would have made a good prime minister?

I think a question that's worth asking is, from November 1937 to September 1939, would Halifax have been a better prime minister than Chamberlain? I think yes. Chamberlain thinks that he can solve every problem, including impending war in Europe. His arrogance is what annoyed his colleagues. Halifax understood his limitations and had a better sense of British military power. He probably would not have flown to Germany in September 1938 to negotiate with Hitler. Had there been no Munich Conference to stop a war, how would history have been different? In comparison with Churchill, well, wartime leadership requires a different kind of personality. Halifax would have been an incredibly competent prime minister and chair of the war cabinet. He would have kept the machinery going in ways that Churchill wasn't very good at. He would have interfered less in military operations, for instance. But wartime leadership in this era of charismatic leaders required charisma. Halifax was not at all charismatic – can you imagine him sitting with Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta in 1945? He would have looked out of place.

THE POSSIBILITY

1940

THE BLITZ

Professor Joe Maiolo suspects that Halifax may have shown more sensitivity towards the threat of air power, and in particular German bombing. Beginning on 7 September 1940 when 300 German bombers raided London, the subsequent 57 attacks would constitute a period known as 'the Blitz' (from the German 'Blitzkrieg') which lasted until May of the following year. The majority of these raids were centred on London, with Liverpool being Britain's second most bombed city, followed closely by Birmingham. Some 43,500 civilians were killed during the entirety of the Blitz. Could Halifax's greater focus on air power have mitigated the severity of the Blitz?

1930S

IMPERIAL PREFERENCE

If Halifax had been prime minister he may well have initiated a return to free trade and a breakdown of imperial preferences. This policy, introduced in 1932, allowed the free entry of imperial goods to Britain and imposed new tariffs on some food and metal imports.

1945-59

HALIFAX AFTER THE WAR

Serving as ambassador to the United States between 1941 and 1946, it was upon his return that Halifax was offered a role in Churchill's shadow cabinet, an offer he declined. Continuing to play an active role in the House of Lords, he retired from frontline politics and spent a great deal of time at his Yorkshire estates. One of his final and most important interventions in the Lords was his criticism of Anthony Eden's handling of the Suez Crisis. Halifax suffered a heart attack on the 23 December 1959 and passed away. What his final years would have been like had he served as prime minister it is hard to know. Indeed, had he accepted Churchill's offer of a position in the Shadow Cabinet it poses the question as to whether he would have had a role in Churchill's 1951-55 government.

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What if...

HITLER HAD NOT BEEN APPEASED BY THE ALLIES?

The possibilities if Britain and France had dismissed Hitler's promises and stood united against his plans

INTERVIEW WITH

© D Stone

Dr David R Stone

David teaches in the Strategy and Policy department of the US Naval War College. He received his PhD in Russian history from Yale University and is the author of numerous books and dozens of articles on Russian and Soviet military history. His most recent book is titled, *The Russian Army in the Great War: The Eastern Front, 1914-1917.*

• These views are David's own and not any official position of the US government.

Between the end of World War I and the late 1930s, Europe had become a very different place. The communist regime in Russia brought with it images of Stalin as an evil boogeyman, preying on democracy and civil liberties. Fascism had found a small foothold in Britain itself, with its leader Oswald Mosley promoting peace rather than war with Nazi Germany. And the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, was following a policy of appeasement towards Hitler. Anything other than a repeat of 1914-18. But there were voices with an opposing view; Hitler was not to be trusted and action needed to be taken to curb his ambitions. What if those voices had managed to win the day?

For the Allies to stand up to Hitler, what do you think would have had to be different?

The big difference would be in domestic politics. Standing up to Hitler would have required political leadership willing to articulate the danger that Hitler presented, and a population willing to think about fighting another war so soon after the terrible losses of World War I. Leadership was key. Neville Chamberlain consistently saw communism as a threat as great or greater than fascism, and was reluctant to align with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany.

At what point could the Allies have taken decisive action?

Many people have focused on the Czechoslovak crisis in May 1938 and the Munich Agreement later that year, and I agree with that.

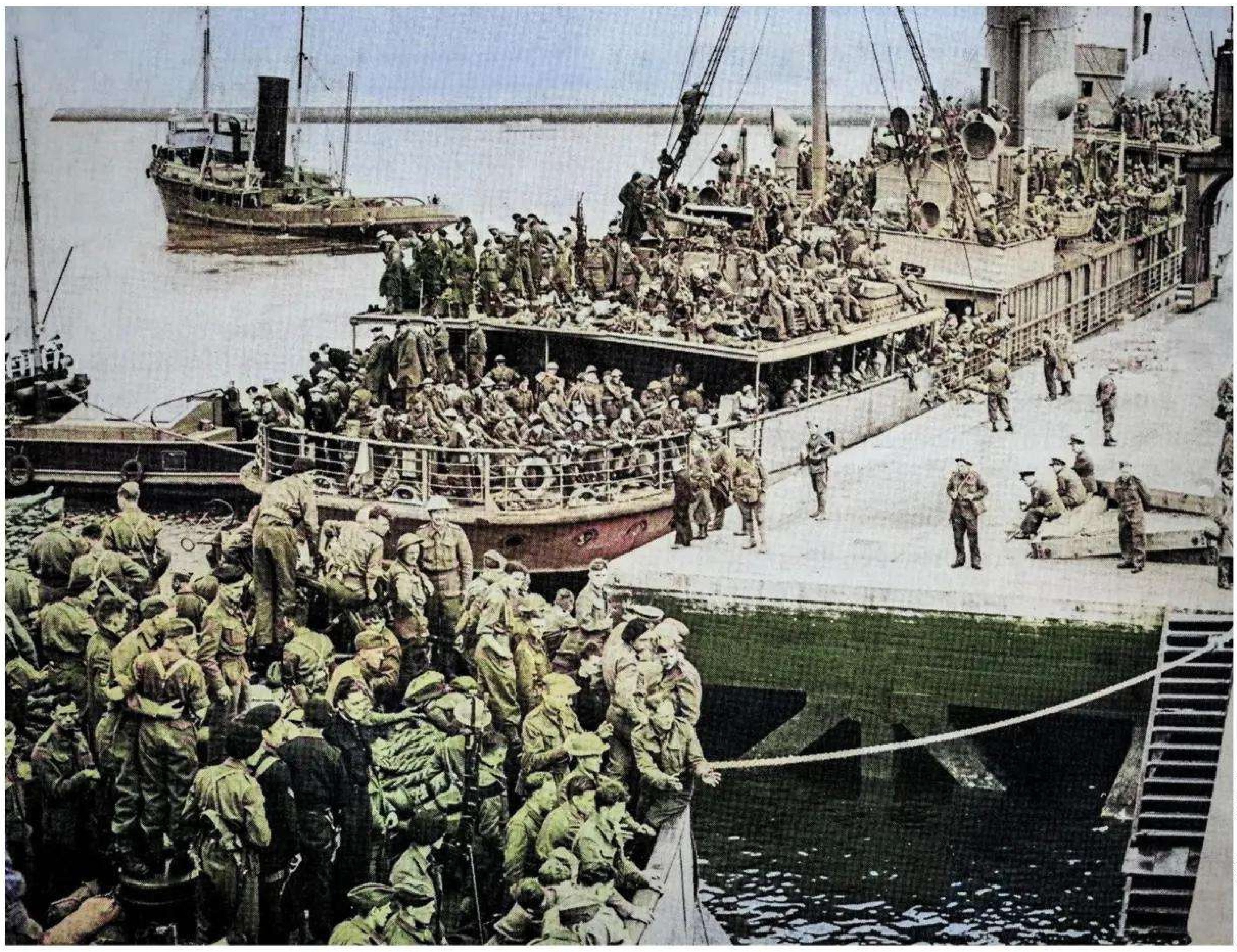
Up until Czechoslovakia, Hitler's moves had been against the Treaty of Versailles, which many saw as being unjust to Germany. He had presented his goals as bringing German populations into Germany. In Czechoslovakia, Hitler focused on the Sudeten German minority, but that would have involved partitioning a sovereign state.

The Czechs were willing to fight rather than give in to Hitler, but in the Munich Conference of September 1938, Britain and France agreed to grant Hitler Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. The Czechs weren't invited to the talks. Six months later, Hitler absorbed the rest of the country.

What if Britain and France had chosen to make a stand and fight in September 1938?

Czechoslovakia would not have been a pushover. It was the most industrialised state in Eastern Europe, and possessed a substantial defence industry of its own. The Czech army was a serious force, though not at the level of Hitler's Wehrmacht. The Czechs also would have been fighting on the defensive and using the substantial defensive fortifications they had built in the mountains that ring Bohemia, the heartland of the Czechoslovak state.

The German army that would have fought in 1938 was not the same force



RIGHT
With a pre-emptive strike the Dunkirk evacuation may never have happened

Images: © Alamy, Getty Images

Telephone: Victoria 9066.

Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to:—
The Under-Secretary of State,
The War Office,
Hobart House,
London, S.W.1,
and the following number quoted.

NATIONAL SCHEME FOR DISABLED MEN

THE WAR OFFICE,
HOBART HOUSE,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Declaration of War

THE PAST

1938

ROLLING OVER

Such was the depth of fear for a further major war in Europe, the stakes for Neville Chamberlain and his government could not have been higher. What if 'The Great War' was not 'the war to end all wars'? Having heard Hitler's demands, the alternative was unthinkable. Painted into a corner by Hitler at the Munich Conference of 1938, Chamberlain was convinced it would not be he who had blood on his hands. There were those who felt Germany had been harshly treated and deserved to regain some of their lands and dignity. Chamberlain swallowed Hitler's words hook, line, and sinker.

1939

LAND FOR LOYALTY

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a trade-off between two ambitious dictators. Important Russian raw materials would be received by Germany in exchange for industrial hardware. But the real deal for Hitler was neutralising his Eastern Front so that he could confidently throw everything he had at the West. In return for sitting on the sidelines, Stalin would piggyback on a Nazi invasion to gain more territory in Poland and the Baltic states, thereby starting his own expansionist ambitions. Despite the dislike of the communist regime, Britain and France had lost a strong potential ally. At least for now.

1939

HOLLOW WORDS

As the year progressed, Hitler's real plans began to reveal themselves. If alarm bells hadn't been ringing before, they definitely were now. Dismissive of any prior agreements, Hitler begins to upgrade his navy and, in complete contravention of the Munich Agreement, the Nazis annexe Bohemia and Moravia. With the writing now appearing on the wall, the British and French are forced into open solidarity with Poland. But Hitler is desperate for access to the Baltic, and Polish territory is in the way. He makes demands without really caring what the reply will be. On 1 September Hitler's forces rush into Poland, with Soviet troops taking their slice shortly afterwards. On 3 September, Britain has no choice but to declare war on Germany.

> "If the Allies were going to fight, 1938 was a much better time than 1939"

that rolled through Poland and France in 1939 and 1940. Hitler was still rebuilding his forces. Many of the German tanks in Poland and France were actually Czech, tanks that Hitler won without firing a shot when he took over Czechoslovakia.

There's strong evidence that if the Allies were going to fight, 1938 was a much better time than 1939. Both sides were busy rearming, but fighting in 1938 would have added Czech forces and Czech industry to the Allied side, and at the very least not have handed over Czechoslovakia's arsenal of weapons to Hitler without a fight.

What would the Soviet reaction have been to this?

The Soviet role in 1938 is perhaps the best argument in favour of choosing that moment to make a stand. The Soviet Union had alliance treaties with both France and Czechoslovakia. Soviet foreign minister, Maxim Litvinov, had spent the 1930s promoting collective security as the best response to the threat of Hitler and Nazism. Litvinov's wife, Ivy, was British and Litvinov had spent several years living in Britain. He understood the West quite well.

Of course, a treaty to defend Czechoslovakia doesn't necessarily mean that the Soviets would have honoured it, but they had signed the treaty in the first place because of the danger of Nazi Germany. And in fact, the Soviets showed every sign in September 1938 of preparing to fight for the Czechs. The Soviets were mobilising their western border military districts. That means getting troops into their units and moving towards the border in preparation for war. The Red Army was enormous, with a massive fleet of tanks and aircraft. This was a serious threat to Hitler's plans.

Potential Soviet assistance against Hitler was wasted when Britain and France sold out the Czechs in the Munich Agreement. Stalin clearly took a lesson that Britain and France could not be trusted to stand up against Hitler. He had always suspected that what the Western powers really wanted was to see the Soviet Union tangled up in a war against Germany, a war that they would sit out. That's probably actually pretty close to what Neville Chamberlain would have preferred – Chamberlain long believed that Stalin was a threat just as serious as Hitler. A year later, in August 1939, the Allies paid the price when Stalin aligned himself with Hitler.

Stalin was obviously no saint. But in 1938, he did not see Germany grabbing Czechoslovakia as being in line with Soviet national interests.

How might Hitler and Germany have reacted to non appeasement or acts of resistance?

Here we can differentiate between Hitler and at least some of his military elite. Hitler's reputation was built on the idea of him being a winner, moving from victory to victory. Add that to his highly-developed sense of his own genius, and it seems as though he likely would have wanted to roll the dice and go ahead with war against Czechoslovakia. If Britain and France made it clear they would fight, it's likely that Hitler would have gone ahead.

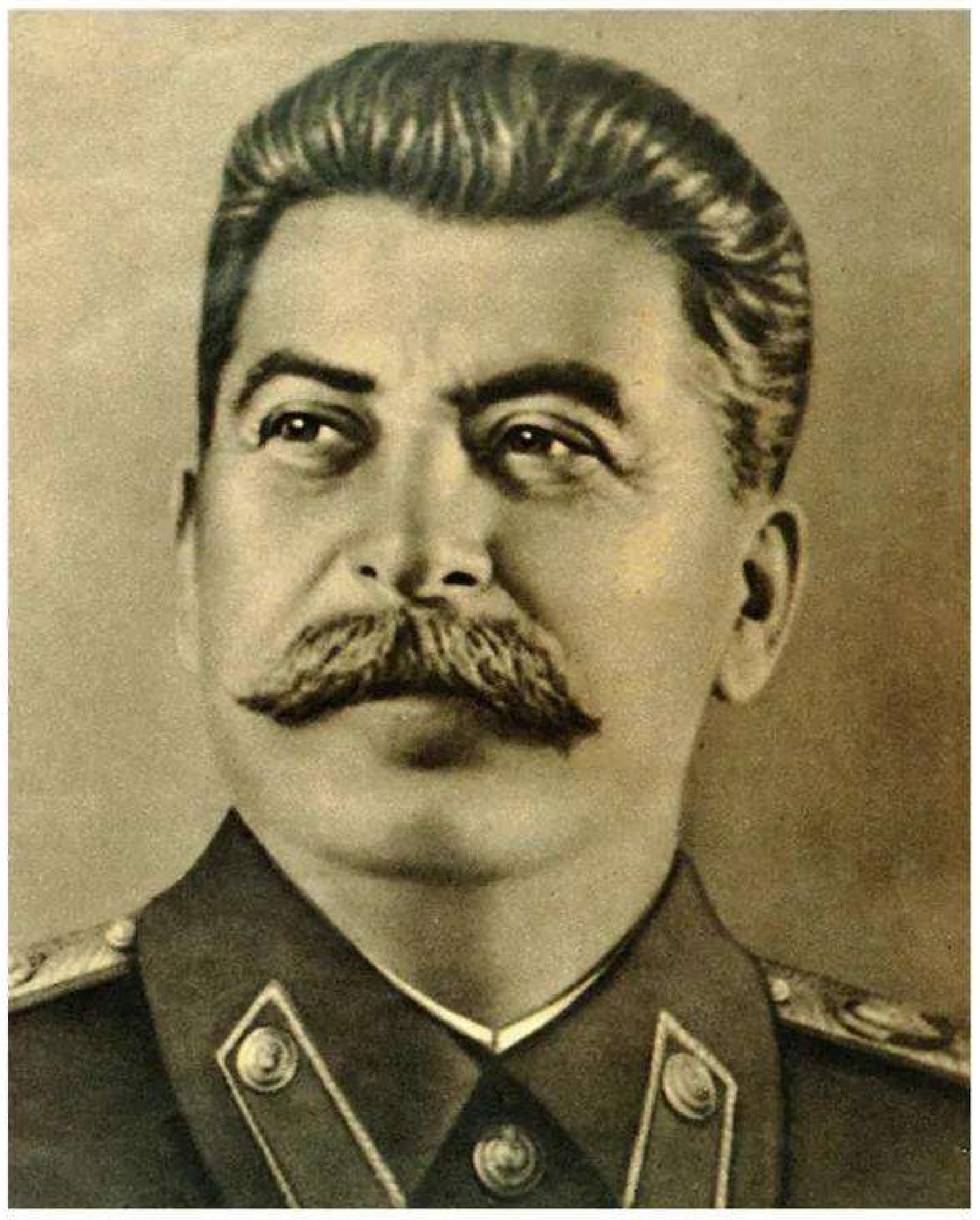
The German generals are, however, another question. They had all lived through World War I, and saw what happened to Germany when it tried to fight a two-front war. We know that at least some among the German generals were plotting against Hitler. It's certainly possible that Hitler would have faced a coup or assassination attempt if he tried to get Germany into another war that his generals thought was unwinnable. None of them were pacifists, and they

BELOW
Before the war Churchill was vocal of his mistrust for Hitler

ABOVE
The USA could have concentrated on the defeat of Japan

all were glad to see Germany breaking out of the limits imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. But that doesn't mean they wanted to see Germany fighting against Britain, France and Russia.

What would the Allies have had to do to be successful and what role, if any, would the US have played?
The big problem for the Allies to solve, if they managed to get their domestic populations on board, was how to handle Czechoslovakia's other neighbours. The Soviet Union had an alliance with Czechoslovakia, but did not actually share a land border. That means that they have to cross either Polish or Romanian territory. Both countries were very concerned that if the Soviets came in, they might not leave. In addition, Poland was interested in some Czech territory. Solving those problems would require skilful diplomacy.



BELOW
Stalin's loyalty to the Allies would suit his own purposes

It's doubtful that the US would have played much of a role here. The US public was slower than European publics to see a direct threat, even if Franklin Roosevelt did see Hitler as a long-term problem. The Americans still had a lot of confidence in the ability of the Allies, and particularly the French army, to keep Hitler in check. That made for a lot of scrambling when France fell in 1940.

How do you think the threat of a world war would have changed how Europe looked?
If the Allies stood up to Hitler in 1938, and the Soviet Union joined them as it looked as though it was preparing to do, it's doubtful Germany would have won. That doesn't mean Germany ends up occupied, but Hitler is humiliated and perhaps out of power. That also means that the Soviet Union would have played a big role in Eastern Europe from 1938 on, though perhaps not as dominant as it was after 1945. We might have seen a type of Cold War; with Germany cut down to size, would the Soviet threat have loomed larger?

THE POSSIBILITY

1938

KEPT BOXED IN

Following the initiative taken by Britain and France, with the cooperation of Russia, Nazi influence within Europe would be substantially curtailed. The situation within Germany itself, with Hitler no longer able to fulfil his promises to the German people, may have become more volatile. The once omnipotent dictator, whose passionate oratory held millions under his spell, would now be just another flawed human being, vulnerable to attack from those desperate for change. A deposed Hitler would still be a threat, and assassination would be the sensible solution. But not before his reputation and character has been completely destroyed in preparation for better relations that Germany would desperately need with the rest of Europe.

JUNE 1944

THE BEAR GROWLS

By being on board with the Allies against Germany from the start, Stalin and the Soviet Union had a lot to gain. The one thing Hitler had tried to avoid was opening the war on two fronts. With the Nazis caught in a vice from both East and West, gains in territory would be reduced. Advances into the USSR may never have happened, with Poland and Czechoslovakia supported by the Allies, and Hitler lacking momentum to force the retreat at Dunkirk. With Germany defeated, Stalin may not have had the large territory gains he won in 1945, but loyalty to the Allies would gain him the respect he could use to his own ends when the time suited him.

1945 ONWARDS

OTHER SIDE OF THE POND

With British and Commonwealth forces – alongside France and Russia – fighting in Europe, the chance of any assistance from the USA becomes less necessary, or likely. With access to more of Europe and its resources, Britain may be less reliant on the Atlantic convoys to keep its people fed. Without having to get embroiled in a European war, the US could divert its intensity towards Japan. Once that war was won, it could remain in isolation. However, post-war Europe, even without large Soviet gains of the Eastern Bloc, would still be a place of potential friction. And without US involvement and with no creation of NATO, it would still not be any safer in the future.

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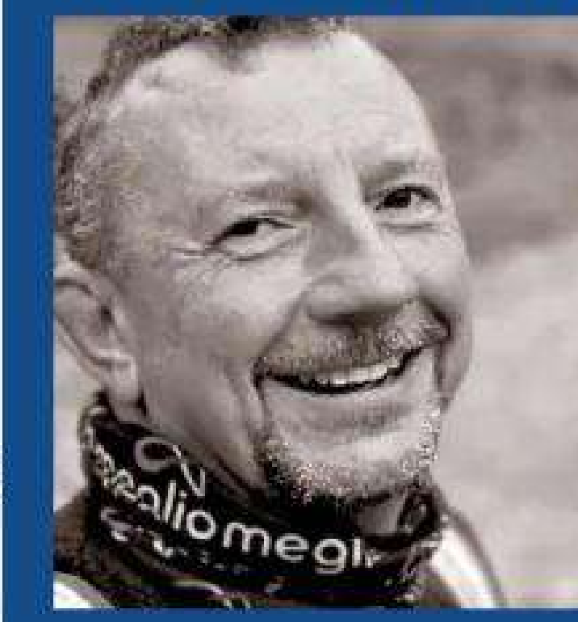
What if...

BRITAIN AND FRANCE HAD NOT DECLARED WAR ON GERMANY?

Could a decision to remain on the sidelines have given Hitler free rein to ravage Europe for the Fatherland?

INTERVIEW WITH



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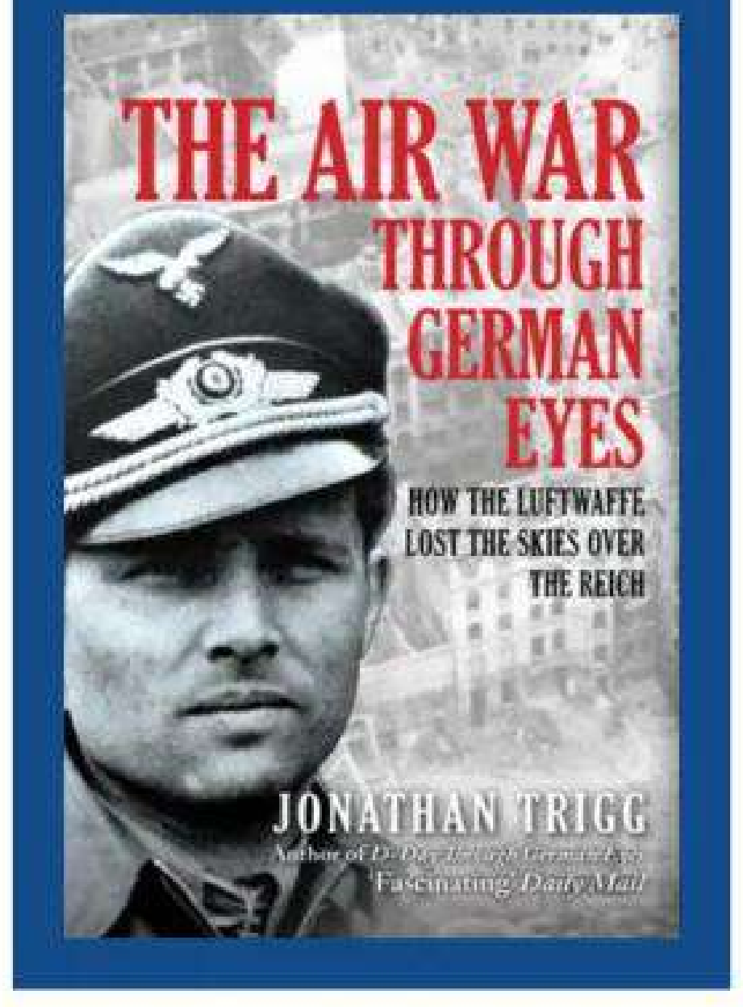
Jonathan Trigg

A former British Army officer, Jonathan has written extensively on the subject of the Second World War, basing his work on in-depth interviews with veterans. A regular expert contributor to all aspects of media, he has been published in over a dozen languages. His most recent book; *The Air War Through German Eyes: How the Luftwaffe Lost the Skies over the Third Reich*, is published by Amberley Publishing.



With the spectre of the horrors of World War I still ingrained in many minds, the prospect of confronting Germany, yet again, was a step too far for many. Inaction would only serve to fuel the Nazi propaganda machine, though, as Hitler embarked on his plans. By once again standing up to the German threat many lives would yet again be sacrificed. By doing nothing those lives would be saved, but it would mean accepting that weakness, breaking of promises, and trust in the words of a fanatical dictator were a reasonable price to pay. And so, with the Nazi war machine able to sweep through Europe unopposed, nowhere and no one would be safe.

What would have happened to domestic politics in Britain and France if they had reneged on their agreement with Poland after the German invasion?

Having famously promised "Peace for our time", after abandoning Czechoslovakia to Hitler at Munich, confidence in Britain's prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, would have plummeted within the UK. However, the anti-war faction in the ruling Conservative Party – led by the foreign secretary, Lord Halifax – would continue to keep him safe in No 10, fearing a repeat of the bloodbath of World War I.

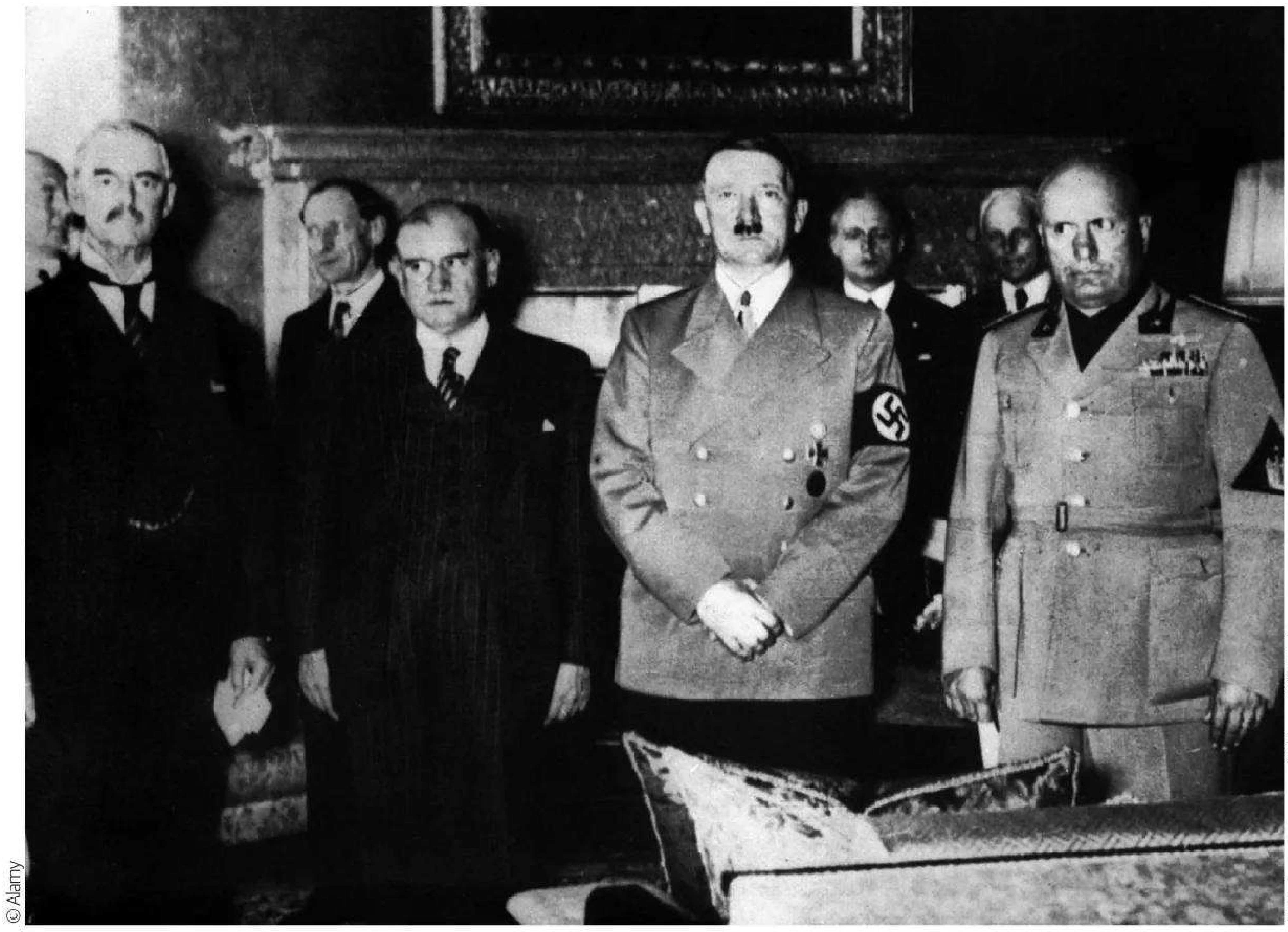
The government of the French prime minister, Édouard Daladier, was already creaking under the weight of internal division in the country, with both communist and neo-fascist extremists battling it out in the streets. However, with the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact holding firm, neither the communists or their erstwhile pro-Nazi opponents would shed a tear for Poland and would continue to shout loudly for the maintenance of peace as long as Hitler's gaze faced east.

With no need to worry about a Franco-British intervention in the West, Germany's victory over Poland would have been even quicker, and its swiftness would have convinced public opinion in Britain and France that any sort of peace with Hitler was better than conflict with a seemingly invincible Nazi war machine.

What boost would it have given Hitler and his regime and what would he have done next?

The swift defeat of Poland – coupled with the fact there was no subsequent declaration of war from Britain and France – would have raised Hitler's own image, along with that of his regime, to unimagined heights both domestically and also on the international stage.

What little internal resistance there was to Hitler within the higher echelons of the German Army would have faded away, and hitherto wavering states in Eastern Europe, such as the Kingdom of Romania, would have been forced to switch their alliance from Britain and France and throw their lot in with the Axis Powers of Germany, Japan and Italy much earlier than they eventually did. Unable to rely on London and Paris, the



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RIGHT
The signing of the Munich Agreement was a Nazi smokescreen

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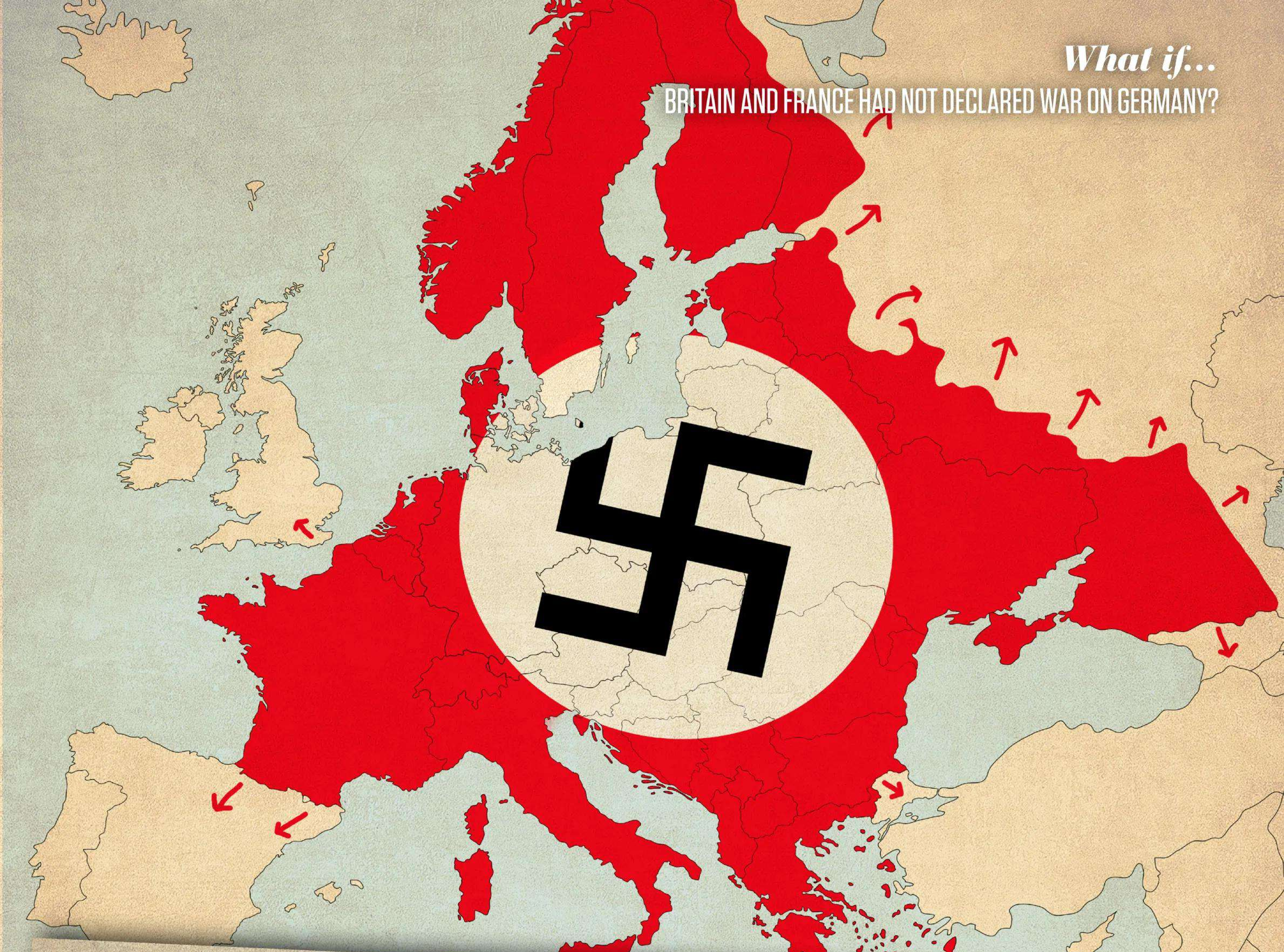

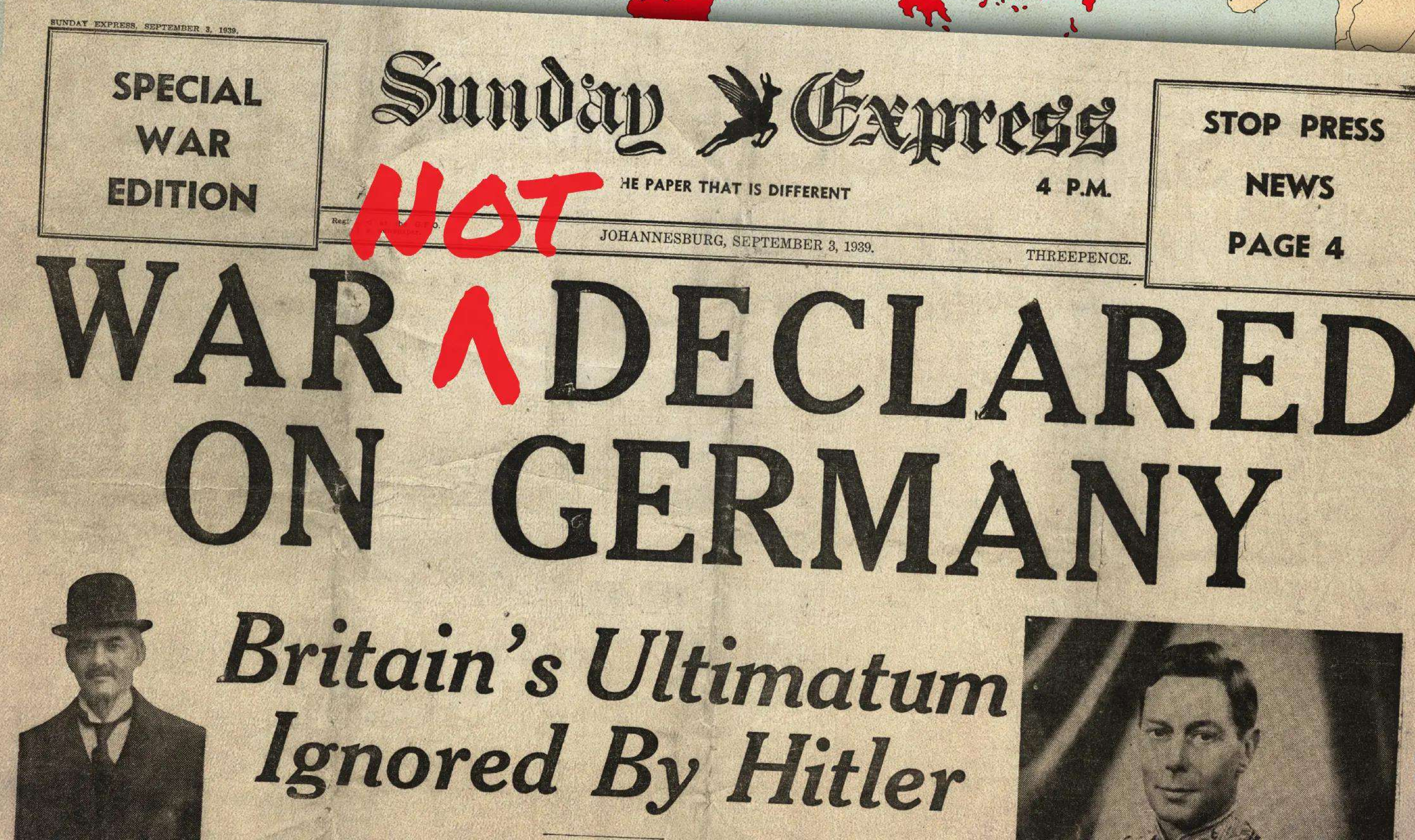

SUNDAY EXPRESS, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939.

SPECIAL WAR EDITION

Sunday Express

HE PAPER THAT IS DIFFERENT

4 P.M.

JOHANNESBURG, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939.

THREEPENCE.

STOP PRESS NEWS PAGE 4

WAR NOT DECLARED ON GERMANY

Britain's Ultimatum Ignored By Hitler

THE PAST

1937

COVERT MANOEUVRES

In May, Neville Chamberlain is appointed prime minister of Britain. It is he who heads the policy of appeasement towards Germany. The horrors of WWI were still fresh in the memory of the country and for many, the avoidance of a second conflict was the only option. The views of those who tried to argue that Hitler could not be trusted, such as Winston Churchill, were dismissed as scaremongering. In November of 1938 Hitler called a meeting of the Reich Chancellery in which the policy of 'lebensraum', or expansion of the German state, was adopted as official foreign policy.

1938

NOT WORTH THE PAPER

In a bold move in March, Hitler annexed the federal state of Austria into the German Reich. Despite such an obvious act of expansion, the appeasement of Hitler's regime continued, and in September the Munich Agreement was signed by Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Germany would be allowed to annex the Sudetenland, a German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia, in exchange for peace. Chamberlain returned to Britain, famously waving a piece of paper in his excitement at having confirmed such an important agreement with honour. Later, outside 10 Downing Street, he was to say, "I believe it is peace for our time… go home and get a nice quiet sleep".

1939

THE TRUTH WILL OUT

In January Hitler implements Plan Z, an expansion of the German Navy, despite the agreement with Britain that each limit their naval power. Expansionism continues, with the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in direct contravention of the Munich Agreement. By March, Britain and France are guaranteeing Polish independence. In April plans begin for the German invasion of Poland; Hitler renounces the Anglo-German Naval agreement and the German-Polish declaration of non-aggression. In July Chamberlain reaffirms support for Poland, but Hitler wants access to the Baltic Sea through the 'Polish Corridor'. He is refused and on 1 September, Germany invades Poland. On 3 September Chamberlain announces Britain is at war with Germany.

The
EAT BRITAIN AT WAR
HE KING'S MESSAGE TO THE EMPIRE
GHTING TO SAVE WORLD
ROM BONDAGE OF FEAR
EMIER SETS UP WAR CABINET
RCHILL FIRST LORD:
R MR. EDEN
WAR CABINET OF NINE
MR. CHURCHILL BACK AT ADMIRALTY
MINISTER OF HOME SECURITY

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Kingdom of Yugoslavia and authoritarian Greece would have had little choice but to join the Axis as well, forming a powerful pro-Nazi coalition that would draw in Turkey, and effectively ring an increasingly worried Moscow with potentially hostile countries.

The awkward peace with Britain and France would mean no naval blockade closing off world markets to German shipping. Also, southeastern Europe's inclusion in the Axis would guarantee Hitler access to vital raw materials such as Romania's oil.

His western flank secure, Hitler would have focused solely on his dream of invading the Soviet Union and destroying communism once and for all. Fascist Italy – with no Mediterranean war to prosecute given the peace with Britain and France – would also look east to build the empire Mussolini craved so desperately.

What may have been the impact on global politics and relationship with the USA?

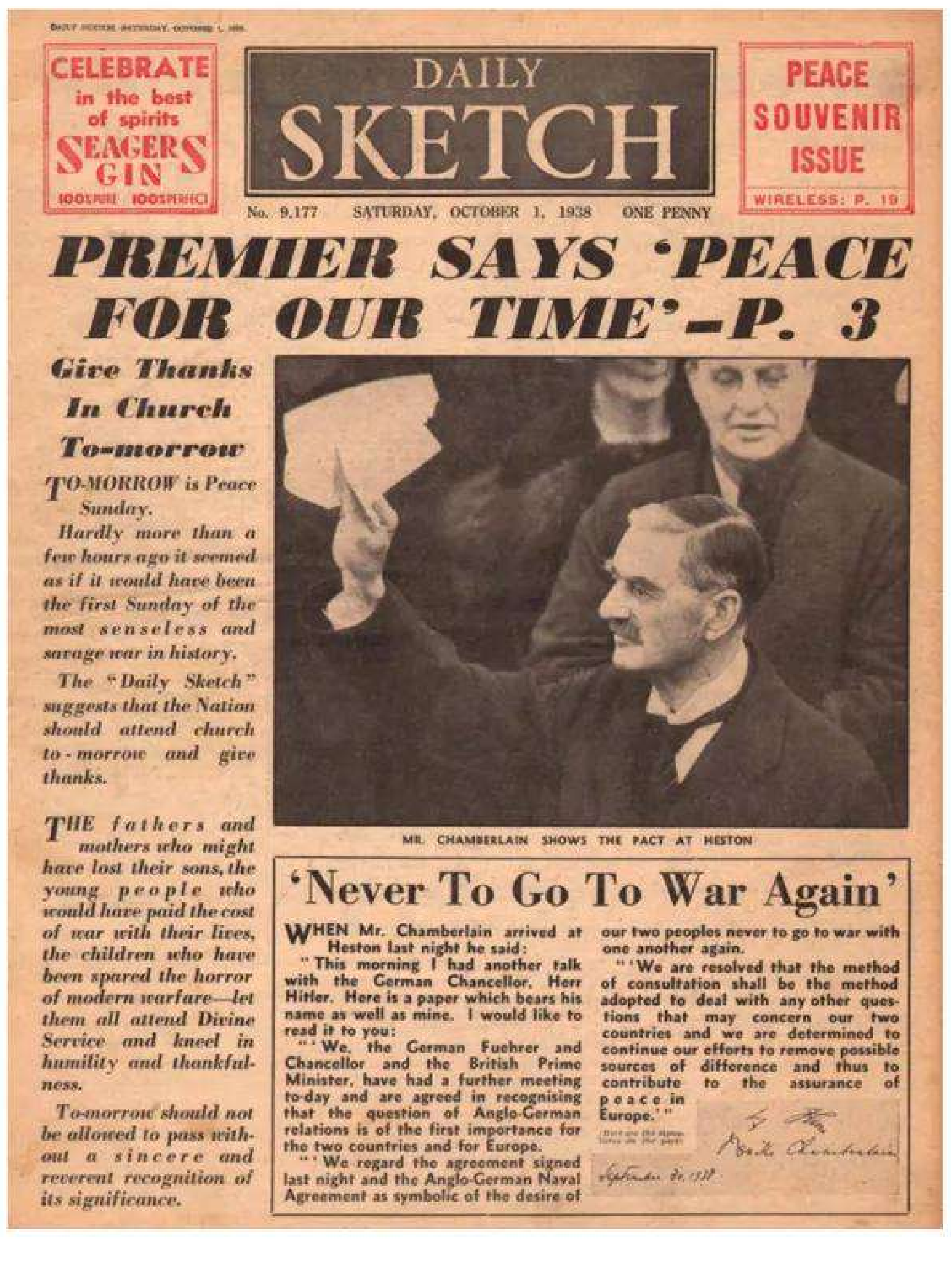
Globally, the prestige of Britain and France would have suffered enormous damage from the act of abandoning an ally they had so recently and so loudly defended in public. The beleaguered League of Nations would have lost all its remaining credibility, given Britain and France were its most powerful members, as smaller states lost their faith in any sort of rules-based order to protect them against an aggressor. In all likelihood the mass of nation members would leave the League and it would have become moribund as a result.

Across the world states of all stripes would have raced to strengthen their militaries as the only trusted means of national defence, while governments with expansionist goals would have been hugely emboldened. Border disputes across South America especially would become extremely fractious and a number of local conflicts would flare up with Paraguay, Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru fighting each other for land and resources.

In the United States, Franklin Roosevelt's growing resolution that America would need, at some point, to intervene in the conflict in Europe on the side of the democracies would have received a hammer blow at what his own electorate would view as Franco-British duplicity. Republican isolationists within the Senate in particular would have been empowered to strengthen American non-intervention with additional Neutrality Acts. These would have tied Roosevelt's hands from being able to support Britain and France in the future, and the Lend-Lease Act would not have been passed in 1941. Crucially, this would mean no support to the Soviet Union, even as

BELOW
Britain was hopeful the agreement would maintain the peace

BELOW RIGHT
Appeasement politicians did not want a return to the horrors of The Great War



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DAILY SKETCH

PEACE SOUVENIR ISSUE

WIRELESS: P. 19

No. 9,177 SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1938 ONE PENNY

PREMIER SAYS 'PEACE FOR OUR TIME'–P. 3

Give Thanks In Church To-morrow

TO-MORROW is Peace Sunday.

Hardly more than a few hours ago it seemed as if it would have been the first Sunday of the most senseless and savage war in history.

The "Daily Sketch" suggests that the Nation should attend church to-morrow and give thanks.

THE fathers and mothers who might have lost their sons, the young people who would have paid the cost of war with their lives, the children who have been spared the horror of modern warfare—let them all attend Divine Service and kneel in humility and thankfulness.

To-morrow should not be allowed to pass without a sincere and reverent recognition of its significance.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN SHOWS THE PACT AT HESTON

'Never To Go To War Again'

WHEN Mr. Chamberlain arrived at Heston last night he said:

"This morning I had another talk with the German Chancellor, Herr Hitler. Here is a paper which bears his name as well as mine. I would like to read it to you:

"'We, the German Fuehrer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting to-day and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

"'We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

"'We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to the assurance of peace in Europe.'"

Neville Chamberlain

September 30, 1938

ABOVE With Britain and France sidelined, Hitler could properly concentrate on Soviet Russia

German panzers rolled towards Moscow, thus depriving the Soviets of over $175 billion of aid in today's money.

What would it have meant for Europe and how would Europe have looked?
Leaving Poland to its fate would have irrevocably altered the balance of power in Europe – at the time by far the most powerful continent in the world. Nazi Germany would have cemented its position as Europe's most dominant land power, with national boundaries that would include Austria, Czechoslovakia, and western Poland. All of Eastern Europe would be in its thrall, and an 'iron curtain' would have been drawn across Europe from the Heligoland Bight in the north, south to neutral Switzerland and then on to the Italian Riviera.

Far-right political parties – of which Western Europe had many – would have received a huge political boost, and in the Netherlands, Belgium and Norway would have been elected to government. France, already suffering a national crisis of confidence, would have lost faith in both itself and its British ally, and would conclude a separate treaty with Germany that would effectively bind it as a junior partner, giving Hitler access to its global empire in return for protection of its position in Europe.

What public opinion issues would have needed to be managed in Britain and France?
In Britain, the outrage felt by many at the government's desertion of Poland would have been tempered by a feeling of relief at being kept out of the war, and a sense among sections of the population that what happens in the European continent was none of their business anyway.

Winston Churchill's warnings of future Nazi aggression, and the evils of the regime, would have continued to fall on deaf ears, and as life went on as normal, Chamberlain would recover his popularity. With much of Western Europe sliding into the new Nazi orbit, British public opinion would increasingly turn its face against a conflict, and only the direct threat of a German invasion – which Hitler did not want – would be enough for any government to declare war.

French public opinion would be split once more as the people realised what growing German hegemony meant for them. On the one hand they still possessed a worldwide empire second only to Britain's in size, and thus still felt themselves to be a global power. But they also would begin to understand that their much-cherished goal of reunifying their lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine with the mother country was now impossible, and that they were now very much in Germany's shadow. For a French public used to the idea of 'la gloire' this would be a bitter pill to swallow.

Would there still have been a full-scale war and, if so, at what point, and what would it look like?
If Britain and France had deserted Poland there would still have been a full-scale war, but it would have come later and looked radically different. With much of Western Europe in Hitler's pocket – and Britain refusing to get involved – Hitler would have been free to concentrate all his military might on crushing the Soviet Union. With no Lend-Lease aid and no allies to turn to, Stalin would have been defeated and the Nazis would have created the largest land empire the world had seen since the time of Genghis Khan.

The British Empire and the United States would now realise they faced an existential threat and would form a mutual protection alliance, even as Hitler loudly and publicly declared he was only interested in friendship with two countries he regarded in some ways as role models for global empire.

The flashpoint for general war would shift from Europe to the Pacific. Its ambitions thwarted by the continuing American embargo, Imperial Japan would have launched its attack on the US Navy in Pearl Harbor and then swept south through Britain and France's Southeast Asian colonies and west across the Pacific.

With Stalin beaten but the conquest of the Soviet Union still unfinished, Hitler would – inexplicably – declare war on both Britain and the United States.

THE POSSIBILITY

1939 ONWARDS

WIPED FROM THE MAP

With no resistance to Germany's expansion, Poland, and possibly many other European countries, would cease to have existed as a nation and would be eradicated from subsequent history by the Nazis. The same would happen to the Jews of Europe right across the continent, with Hitler spreading his 'final solution' to his complete overthrow of the Soviet Union and the Slavic peoples, eradicating much of the population of the former Soviet Union, leaving the rest to live as part of the Nazi 'empire' and a cruel and oppressive regime.

1939-1950

MUTUALLY ASSURED DEADLOCK

When war did break out, the full-scale conflict between the Anglo-American allies and the German and Japanese empires would be fought out across the globe to stalemate, with neither side strong enough to finally defeat the other. Because of British and French inaction regarding Hitler's ambition, he was now the master of Europe. The Soviet Union is all but defeated and neutralised, and France and Britain are in no position to support their assets in South Asia, leaving the door open for Japanese occupation, giving them a stronger foothold in the Pacific for their war with the USA.

1945

THE SCIENTIFIC SOLUTION

With a global conflict rumbling on with neither side making a decisive blow, the balance would finally be tipped by America's invention of the atomic bomb. With thousands of lives lost and billions of dollars spent, the only solution would be the deployment of one single weapon that could do the work of thousands of troops and armour. The only way the Nazis and the Japanese empires could be defeated was through the repeated use of the bomb on both Japan and Nazi Germany. The price for peace would be making much of Europe and Japan uninhabitable.

© Alamy

What if...

MUSSOLINI HAD JOINED THE ALLIES?

Driven by ambition, Italy's participation in the Axis war effort led to the collapse of its empire, the fall of the Fascist Party and Mussolini's death

INTERVIEW WITH

© Ella Bosworth-Gerbino

Professor Richard Bosworth

Richard has written and edited over 30 books. He has written extensively on Italian fascism and his latest book, *Politics, Murder and Love in an Italian Family*, is out now.

Stuck in the power politics of the Great War, Italy was enthusiastic to join the German war effort following the defeat of France, believing it would significantly grow its African empire. This aim contradicted the German fanatical and pseudo-scientific war goals and Italy soon became isolated as Germany shifted its army towards Operation Barbarossa in the East. Italy burned with humiliation as its treasured empire fell, Mussolini was ousted and the Wehrmacht took control of Italy. Could aligning with the Allies instead in 1939 have saved the Italian Empire, Mussolini and the Fascist Party?

What was Mussolini's motivation for joining the war on the Axis' side in June 1940?

It wasn't Nazism that drove Italy but imperial ambition. It is easy to make coloured shirt and Holocaust parallels between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany dictators, but there are plenty of reasons to instead consider Italy as a belated European imperial power. After 1860, Italy was dogged by the fact it was elevated to a great imperial power but remained the least economically advanced of its contemporaries. Italy was forced to be overambitious and overcommitted itself economically and militarily to its empire. It took until after 1945, when Italy became a small but reasonable player on the stage of international politics, for Italy to reduce the scale of its imperial ambitions. For example, it hasn't invaded Ethiopia despite having a prime minister who admired Mussolini in her girlhood.

The other great generalisation that can be made is that once Italy was united in 1861, it entered all wars aggressively. The same can be said of June 1940, where Italians desired a quick victory. It was not only Mussolini – there were plenty of people who were more doubtful than him in the agonising months between September 1939 and June 1940. Questions were being asked about whether Italy was repeating 1914-15 when Italy delayed its entrance into the Great War, and in many ways, it was. By June 1940, France had been defeated, and by a conventional reading of Italian power politics, it was time to go into the war on the winning German side. Italy could then easily betray Germany when it came to making peace deals with Britain and France and add places like Djibouti and Malta to the empire.

How was the personal and political relationship between Mussolini and Adolf Hitler?

I'm increasingly convinced that Italy is better thought of in comparison with the other European imperialist states, including Britain and France. Its killing fields were in Africa rather than Europe. Perhaps 3,000 people died during Mussolini's rise to power and 7,000 Italian Jews were killed in Italy's grovelling participation in the Holocaust. However, there's no particular reason to think that in 1930, Mussolini was any more anti-Semitic than Churchill.

It's the empire that's interesting – old, traditional and nationalist Italy is as present in the political culture as fascism. The Duke of Aosta became the viceroy and governor-general of Italian East Africa in 1937. He pursued a policy

Main image source: © Getty Images

RIGHT
Mussolini, centre, during the March on Rome in 1922

THE PAST

JUNE 1940

JOINING THE AXIS

As the summer of 1940 began, Mussolini was absolutely convinced that a German victory was inevitable. Germany had defeated France and the British Army evacuated via Dunkirk. Mussolini joined the war on the side of the Axis in June 1940 and wasted absolutely no time in launching his East African Campaign, seizing British Somaliland alongside Kenyan and Somali territories, which were promptly added to Italian East Africa.

FEB 1941 – SPRING 1943

MILITARY COLLAPSE

In early 1941, the Italian Army began to struggle, forced back to Libya during Operation Compass. Its position in Africa became untenable during the Tunisia Campaign in early 1943 and the Allied invasion of Sicily brought the war onto the Italian homefront. Discontent grew with labour strikes beginning in March 1943 and concern about the German presence in the country.

JULY 1943

MUSSOLINI FALLS FROM POWER

Mussolini called a Grand Council meeting in July 1943, during which a no-confidence resolution against him is carried. The next day, Mussolini was arrested by 200 carabinieri on the King's orders and Pietro Badoglio was appointed as prime minister. Upon being discovered by communists on 28 April 1945, Mussolini was executed, and an angry mob hung his corpse alongside his mistress, Claretta Petacci.

O SENZA LA LEGA L'ETIOPIA È NOSTRA
DUCE
CIRCOLO MARIO MOR
ITALY

ABOVE
Italian crowds celebrate the conquest of Ethiopia, reflecting imperial ambition across the country

ABOVE RIGHT
Left to right, Mussolini, Hitler and Ciano meet in 1940 to discuss the war

that was exactly what you would expect from a European imperial power, with the same amount of bloodshed as seen with the British in Kenya and the French in Algeria.

Mussolini had accepted the rhetoric of his regime and thought himself Hitler's superior, even though Germany's military and economic strength was much greater than Italy's. In my biography of Mussolini many years ago, I called Italy the 'ignoble second' to Germany, whereas Austria-Hungary had been Germany's 'noble second' in World War I. Mussolini was also trying to persuade Hitler to make a separate peace in the East without understanding the fanaticism and pseudo-science behind Nazi anti-Semitism and anti-communism. Hitler desired to completely extirpate Jewish people, Russians and communists. Meanwhile, Mussolini was still thinking in terms of pre-1914 power politics, whereby one side was pitted against the other purely based on imperial ambitions.

When Italy joins the war, it suffers near continuous military defeats. What was the impact of these failures on the Italian political environment and Mussolini's control of the country?

It was a pathetic failure to be unable to defend the empire that had been taken with so much propaganda and endorsed by all sorts of Italians. Even liberal anti-fascists supported the empire, including Benedetto Croce who gave his senator's gold medal to the state when it was collecting jewellery to prop up the economy against sanctions organised by the British. Yet, the empire collapsed without a whimper. The army that took over in Eritrea and Somalia was ridiculous, but the Italians had no military or economic power to provide the Duke of Aosta with the necessary forces in 1942.

There wasn't a huge distinction between Mussolini and the other members of the Italian ruling elite. Mussolini was increasingly baffled by the military failure and more baffled by having to wear a coloured shirt, but he knew that the party was in trouble. By the second half of 1942, the Italian elites and sensible members of the Fascist Party, like Mussolini's son-in-law Galeazzo Ciano and justice minister Dino Grandi, thought it was time to make a peace deal. Conversations started occurring between the King and the military chiefs. Ciano was made ambassador to the Vatican. Despite the disagreements and even though in July 1943 Ciano betrayed Mussolini and got executed, it was clearly hoped that there would be whispers around the corridors of the Vatican about a growing Italian desire for a deal that could get leaked to the United States.

Meanwhile, Mussolini was seeking a way to make sufficient military progress to negotiate the return of Mogadishu and Djibouti to the Italian Empire. He thought Italy could still be a traditional great power, combined with the paraphernalia of a coloured shirt-wearing dictatorship. There's a contradiction between this superficial ideology and propaganda and anything beyond the surface. Mussolini got more depressed

> "Mussolini was increasingly baffled by the military failure"

ABOVE
An Italian family enjoys their first meal for three days, which was provided by the Allied liberators

BELOW
Partisans round up fascist sympathisers in Rome

as the war went on and was troubled by what was happening. The party was disappearing, and the Italian public started to wonder why exactly they were involved in this war, given that they were losing the empire.

Had Mussolini brought Italy into the Allied camp, how would the power dynamics have changed and what tensions could have emerged among the Allies?

Had the Italians been on the British and French side in 1939, I don't know how they would have fared militarily. Germany remained militarily stronger and Italy was financially exhausted from its empire. What you find when reading about Eritrea and Ethiopia from 1940 and 1945 is that when the British came in, they didn't talk about the alleged number of killings across the Italian Empire that reached up to 770,000. Instead, the British saw the Italians as feckless, spending far too much on their empire. Italy would have had to negotiate its way around that with the British.

The other potential 'What If?' is that Ciano flirted with supporting Finland when the Soviet Union invaded it in alliance with Nazi Germany. What if the Italians had intervened in Finland and engaged with Stalin's Soviet forces when Stalin was allied with Hitler? What on Earth would that have meant for World War II? I can't imagine that the Italians would have been particularly helpful to the Finns.

If Italy had become Allied, what difference would it have made to its post-war experience?

The simple answer is, if Franco lasted until he died, then why wouldn't Mussolini? The medical reports on Il Duce when the Americans took his corpse showed that he was in good health. Therefore it's reasonable to assume that the Fascist Party, alongside the monarchy, might have remained in power for a long time.

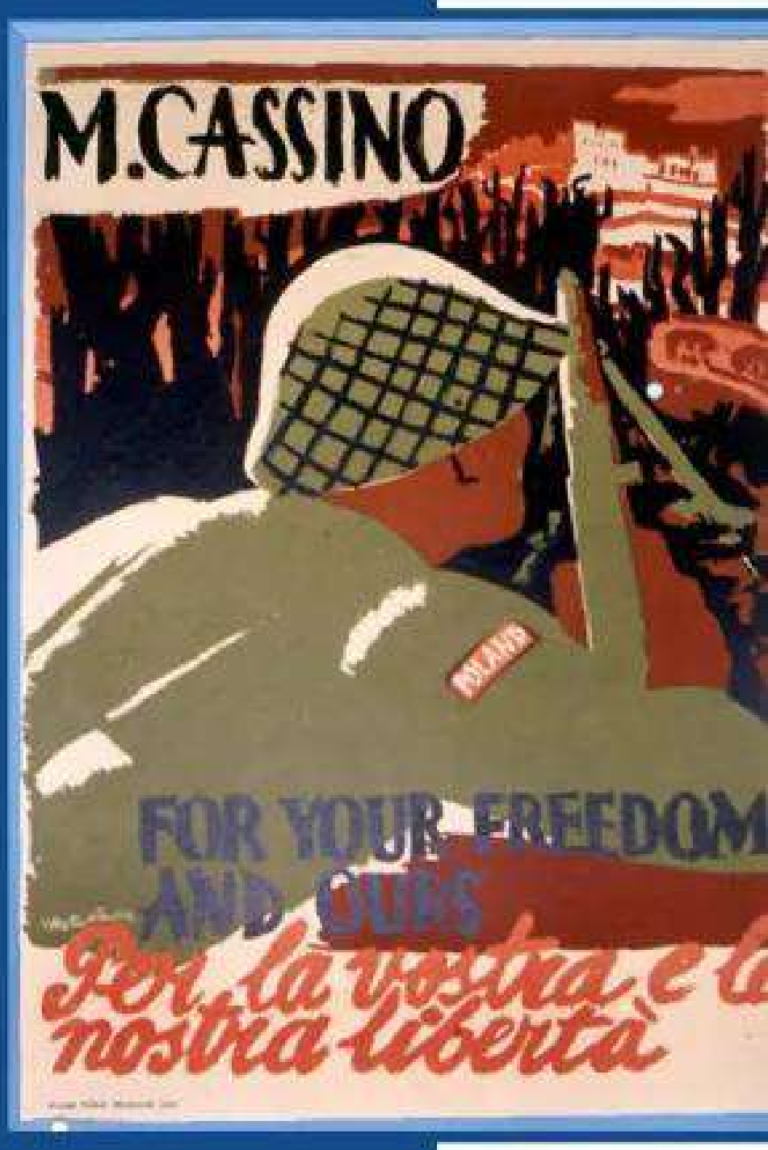
Once Mussolini fell in 1943 and the state was run by the Germans via a puppet dictator, it was communists who were the main centre of military resistance in Italy. A post-war fascist regime may have struggled to deal with these same communist elements. There is also no reason to think that the later post-Mussolini Italy wouldn't have converted to liberal democracy as Spain and Portugal did after their fascist regime fell. The only troubling aspect of that point of view is that Spain and Portugal had residual empires that later collapsed when their dictatorships fell. Meanwhile, Italy would have been a bigger empire with much more invested in it, so it would have had to make a greater adjustment.

THE POSSIBILITY

1939-45

WARTIME STRUGGLES

Joining the Allies would have drawn Italy into direct conflict with the Wehrmacht on the homefront and throughout its African empire. As a military and economic inferior, Italy would have struggled to hold its own. The other Allies would have had to provide extensive military support.



1947

PARIS PEACE TREATIES

The Paris Peace Treaties were created in negotiations with the Axis nations that had switched sides during the war. However, if Italy had never joined the war on the Axis' side, it would not have been subjected to the treaty and could have kept hold of its precious African colonies. Italy might have even been able to use the treaties to expand its empire.

1963

MUSSOLINI'S REIGN CONTINUES

When the war ended in 1945, Mussolini was 62 years old and in relatively good health. Without being removed and later executed due to a disastrous war against the Allies, he could have remained in power. Following his death at 80 years old, either the Fascist Party would have remained in power under his son-in-law Ciano, or democracy may have eventually emerged.

All images: Getty Images

What if…

CHARLES LINDBERGH HAD RUN FOR PRESIDENT?

Could a fascist really have run for the presidency of the United States in 1940 and won?

INTERVIEW WITH

Candace Fleming

Candace Fleming is a bestselling author whose work spans many genres. She has written numerous children's books such as *Boxes For Katie* and *Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!* as well as non-fiction titles including *Presenting Buffalo Bill*. Her latest book, *The Rise And Fall Of Charles Lindbergh*, was published in 2020.

Who was Charles Lindbergh?

Charles Lindbergh became famous in 1927 when he became the first man to fly across the Atlantic from New York to Paris. Suddenly, out of nowhere dropped this 25-year-old who was an incredibly brave pilot. And he had this crazy idea for getting across the ocean: he stripped all excess weight out of his aeroplane because the less weight the more fuel he could carry. Basically, what remained was a kite. With fuel. It was called the Spirit Of St Louis and he flew it across the Atlantic in 33½ hours. When he landed he became a worldwide hero, particularly in the US.

Folks, especially in the 1920s, were feeling disillusioned about heroes and society as a whole. Now, all of a sudden, here was this wholesome, handsome young man who didn't smoke or drink. Americans saw in him not just a hero, but almost a superman. The kidnap and murder of his two-year-son Charles Jr in 1932 added another layer to the hero. Now, not only was Lindbergh a great American hero who was wholesome, moral and upstanding, but he was now also a tragic figure. Americans love those.

What were his political views like up to 1940?

He had a really good mind but his politics were formed more by experience than academia. He was a staunch eugenicist through the 1930s, and he worked with a man named Dr Alexis Carrel, who wrote a book called *Man The Unknown,* which laid out his extreme views about eugenics, things like: "the white race is drowning in a sea of inferiors" and "only the elite make the progress of the masses possible". It was time with Carrel that worked to form Lindbergh's untrained mind. Lindbergh bought into all Carrel's rot.

They disparaged others who they believed threatened America's "racial strength", such as Russians, Jews, Asians and southern Europeans. Then, in the spring of 1936, Lindbergh had an opportunity to go to Hitler's Germany to take a look at the Luftwaffe. In the few weeks he was there he became infatuated with how efficient and modern it was. He believed Hitler was the best thing that could've happened to Europe, even calling Hitler a "visionary". By 1938, many people in the US and abroad suspected he was pro-Nazi.

What was Lindbergh's stance on World War II?

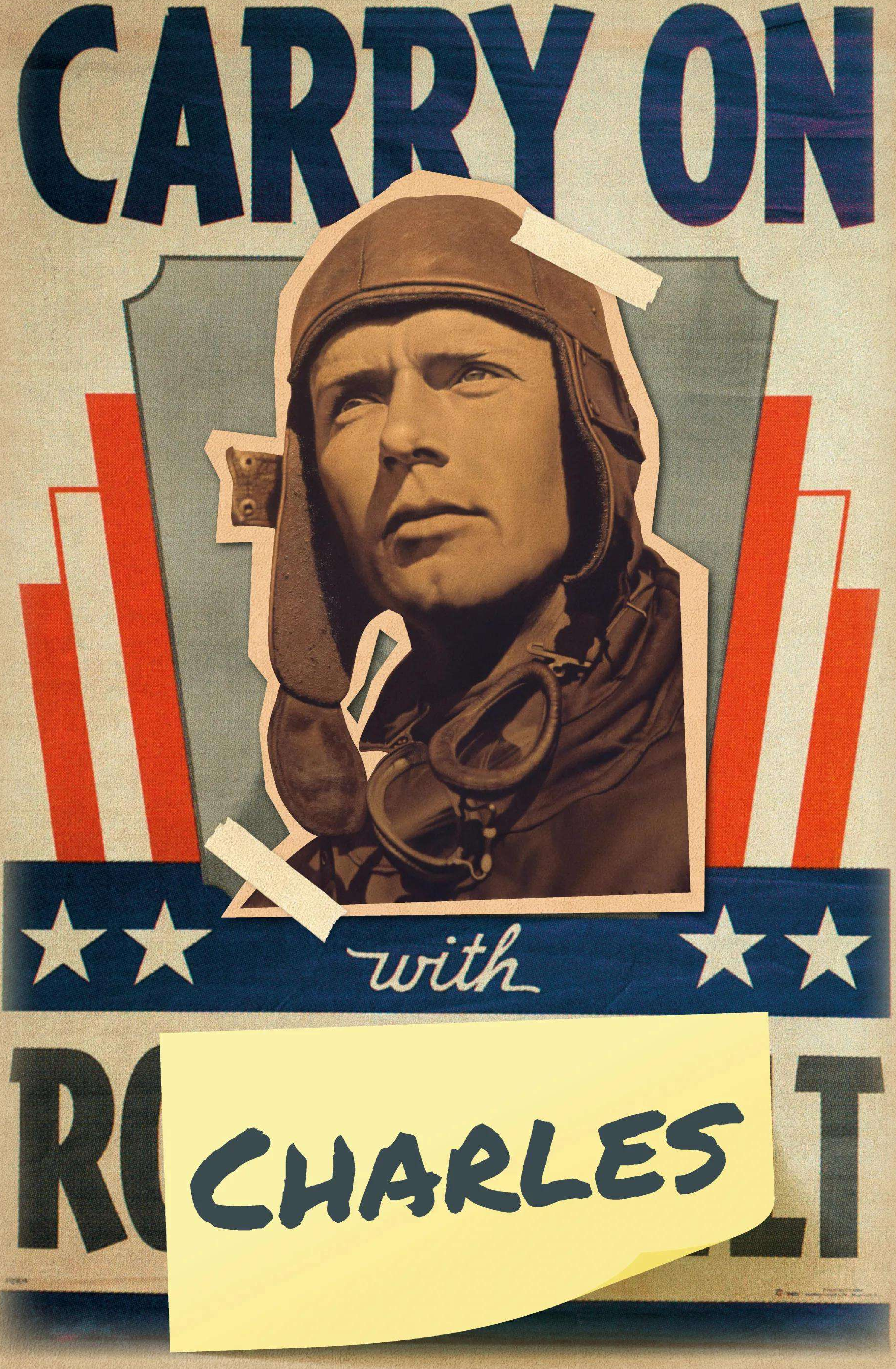
When he returned to the United States in 1939, he firmly believed Germany was saving Europe. He also saw it as Europe's mess and wanted the United States to stay out of it, with one exception. If the United States was going to join Germany in its fight against the Russians and Japanese (what he deemed "lesser races"), that would have been something he found acceptable. Nowadays, some think of him an isolationist. He wasn't. He was only isolationist in regard to the United States fighting *against* Nazi Germany. If, however, the US joined the war on the side Nazi Germany, that would have been a different thing. And as for the war in the Pacific, he was all

MESSERSCHMITT

© Getty Images

RIGHT Lindbergh examining a Messerschmitt fighter at a factory near Munich

Main image sources: 2x © Getty Images, © Alamy


CARRY ON
with
RO
LT
CHARLES

THE PAST

1927

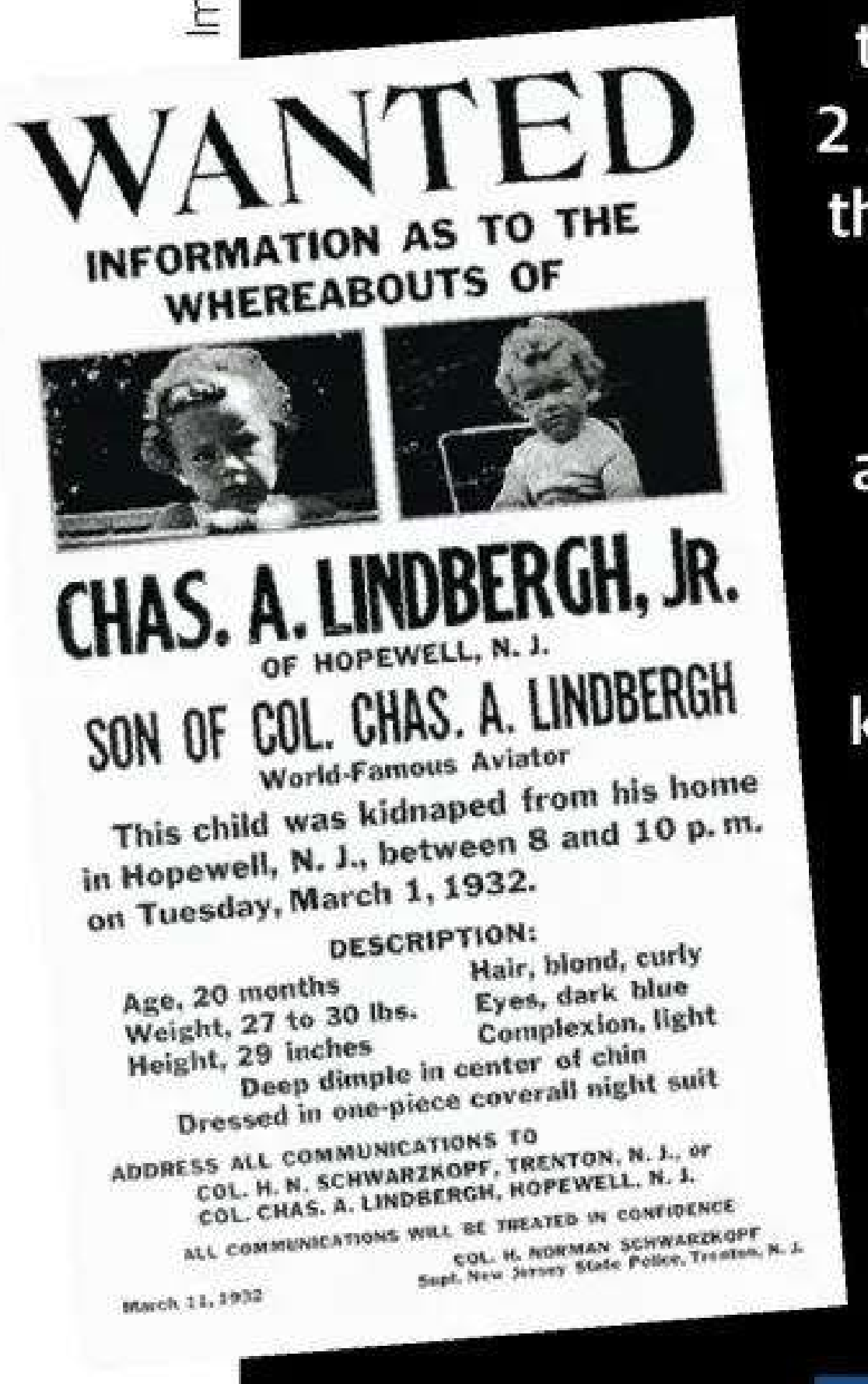
FLIGHT ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

When Lindbergh left college he became a 'barnstormer', a daredevil stunt pilot who would appear at fairs. Joining the US Army Air Corps, he graduated first in his class and became an airmail pilot. Since 1919, a contest to fly across the Atlantic had been arranged by hotel owner Raymond Orteig with a prize of $25,000 to the winner. Opting not to include a parachute and more fuel instead, Lindbergh successfully flew some 3,600 miles in 33½ hours.

1932

LINDBERGH KIDNAPPING

At 9pm on the evening of 1 March 1932, two-year-old Charles Lindbergh Jr was taken from the family home. An hour later his disappearance was discovered and a ransom note for $50,000 was found. A massive police investigation was launched and on 9 March Dr John F Condon (a retired school principal) began to work as a go-between on behalf of the Lindberghs. For months Condon negotiated and delivered payments to the kidnapper until on 2 Apri he was informed that the child could be found on a boat in Massachusetts. The child was not there and on 12 May his partially decomposed body was discovered, having been killed by a blow to the skull two months earlier. The kidnapper would later be caught and executed by electric chair in 1936.



WANTED
INFORMATION AS TO THE
WHEREABOUTS OF

CHAS. A. LINDBERGH, JR.
OF HOPEWELL, N. J.
SON OF COL. CHAS. A. LINDBERGH
World-Famous Aviator

This child was kidnaped from his home in Hopewell, N. J., between 8 and 10 p. m. on Tuesday, March 1, 1932.

DESCRIPTION:

Age, 20 months	Hair, blond, curly
Weight, 27 to 30 lbs.	Eyes, dark blue
Height, 29 inches	Complexion, light

Deep dimple in center of chin
Dressed in one-piece coverall night suit

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO
COL. H. N. SCHWARZKOPF, TRENTON, N. J., or
COL. CHAS. A. LINDBERGH, HOPEWELL, N. J.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS WILL BE TREATED IN CONFIDENCE

COL. H. NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF
Supt. New Jersey State Police, Trenton, N. J.

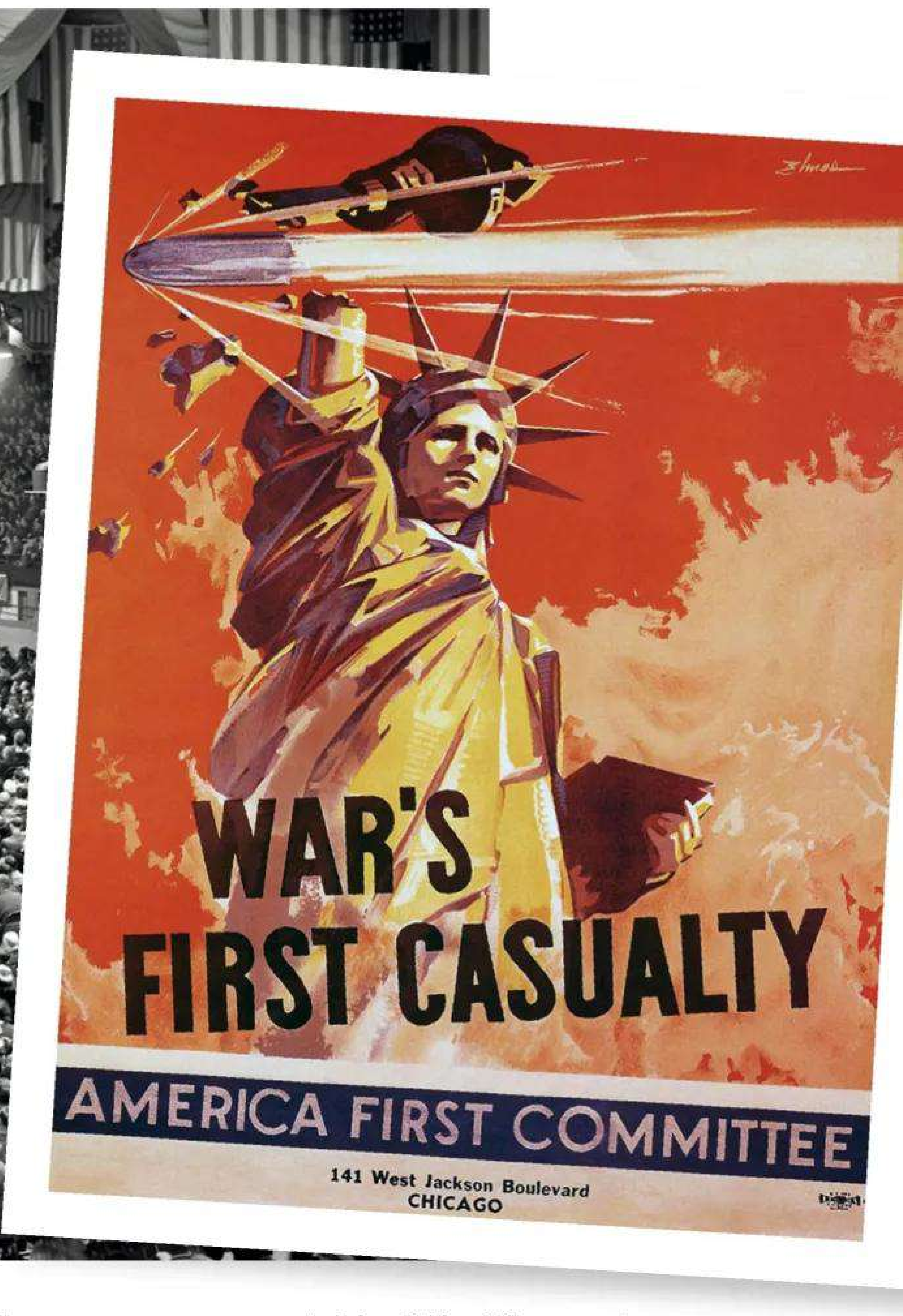
March 11, 1932

Image source: wiki/SamClayton

1940

ROOSEVELT'S VICTORY

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's decision to seek a third term in office was one of the most important presidential victories in American history. Defying the two-term tradition set by George Washington, Roosevelt ran against the Republican candidate Wendell Willkie, who was opposed to American intervention in the war. Roosevelt won comfortably with 54.8% of the popular vote and 84.5% of the electoral college.



ABOVE-LEFT One of the America First Committee's rallies, attended by about 10,000 people

ABOVE-RIGHT An America First Committee propaganda poster

about that. When America did enter the war in 1941, he was blackballed by the Roosevelt administration. He wasn't allowed to rejoin the Air Corps or enter military service at all. FDR viewed Lindbergh as a Nazi sympathiser and he wasn't allowed to fight. Eventually, he got himself to the South Pacific through other channels and flew against the Japanese. You can see, though, that he was definitely not an isolationist. Sadly, post-war his opinions didn't change. He did a lot of apologising but he never outright said, "You know, I was wrong about eugenics. I was wrong about Hitler. My political stance was not grounded in fact." Instead, Lindbergh didn't quite understand why people were so angry about his views.

Who were the America First Committee?

America First was formed by a group of college students. They were isolationists who truly did not want to repeat of World War I. It grew rapidly and became a popular national organisation with thousands of members. America First was made up of Americans from all walks of life who wanted to keep the US out of the war in both Europe and the Pacific. But as time passed, many Americans began to see the gravity of the situation in Europe. They moved away from America First and began supporting FDR's efforts to provide Britain with the war materials she needed to defend herself from the Germans. The vacuum left by their departure was quickly filled by racists, eugenicists, Nazi sympathisers and anti-Semites. This is when Lindbergh became the face of America First. By 1940 he'd become louder and more strident about not fighting Germany. The things that came out of his mouth were virulently anti-Semitic. He accused American Jews of forcing America into a war. He called them "others" and implied that they weren't real Americans. Wonderfully, Americans didn't stand for it. In 1941, he gave a particularly anti-Semitic speech in Des Moines, Iowa. Millions of people listened in on the radio and the next morning Americans turned on him. Men stood up in Congress and called it the most anti-American talk they'd ever heard, and newspapers called him out on their front pages. He really got publicly smacked around. Three months later, Pearl Harbor was attacked and the United States entered the war. America First was disbanded and Lindbergh disappeared from the public stage – at least for a while.

What do you think a 1940 Lindbergh presidential campaign could have looked like?

It would have been big, loud and nationalistic. He would've flown himself to his rallies because people would've loved that, and those rallies would have been big and wild, maybe a little violent. They would have been broadcast coast-to-coast on the radio so he would have reached a wide audience. What would he have stood for? Policy-wise, he would have advocated no war with Germany, but definitely with Japan. He would have promised voters a more friendly relationship with Nazi Germany. In his published journals Lindbergh writes about making way for white men and reserving nations solely for white men, so I'm sure his campaign would have reflected this. He probably would've used America First as a slogan, but changed its meaning. In Lindbergh's campaign, American First would have meant white America first, and my guess is he'd have promised policies to back up the slogan. What kind of policies? Stopping immigration into the country, building a wall along the borders (he actually did advocate this, calling them "ramparts"), building up the military, curtailing the freedom of the press, and the voluntary sterilisation of those deemed 'genetically unfit'.

Could he have won in 1940?
Americans were becoming a little less isolationist at this point. But Lindbergh was so popular – a great American hero and a superstar celebrity – and Americans love 'celebrities'. We tend to elect them without much regard for their knowledge, experience or ability. FDR, of course, was popular too, but not as popular as he had been in previous elections. Lindbergh would have been a formidable opponent. I think there's a very good chance he could have won the presidency.

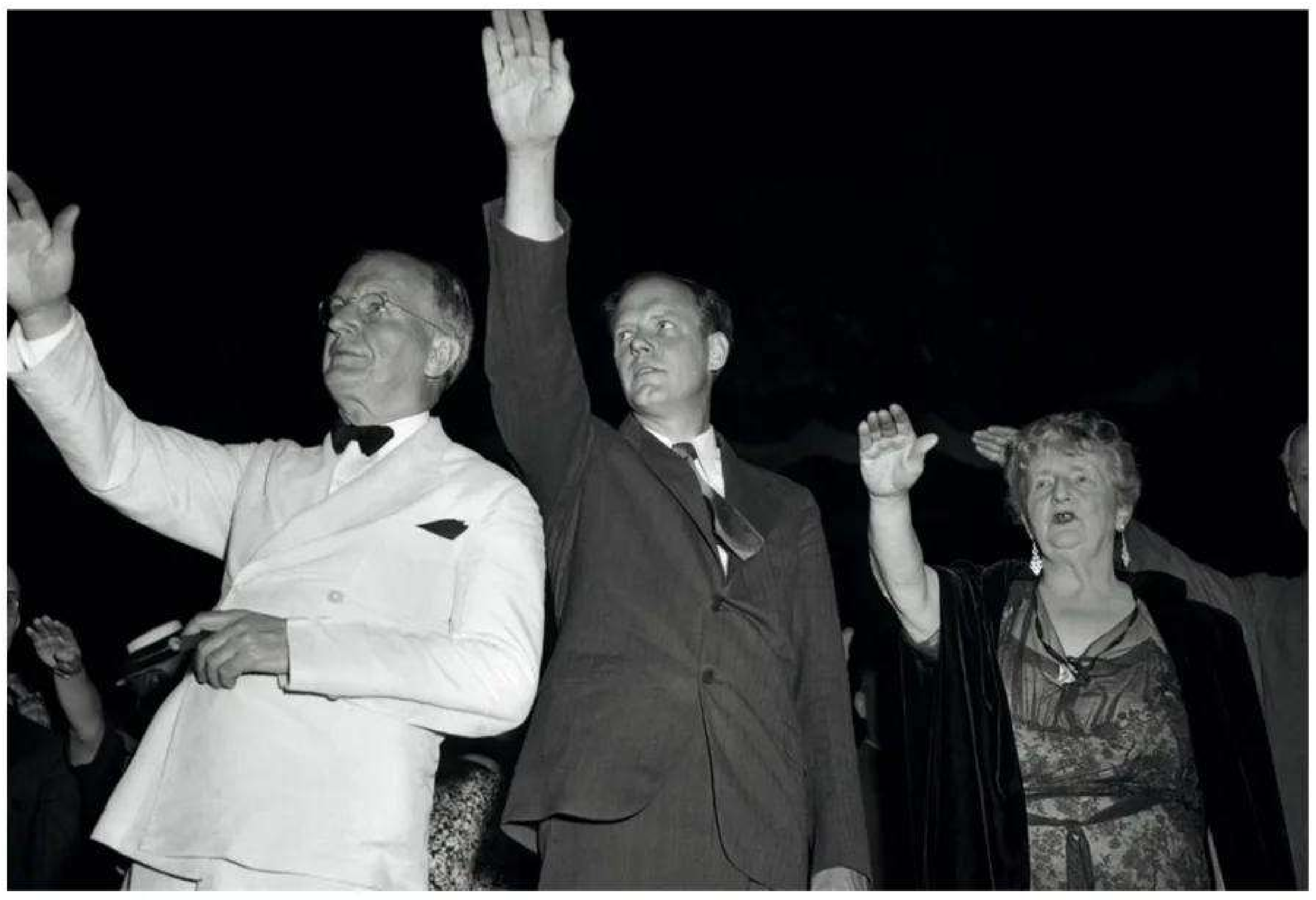
> " There's no way a President Lindbergh would have provided war aid to Britain "

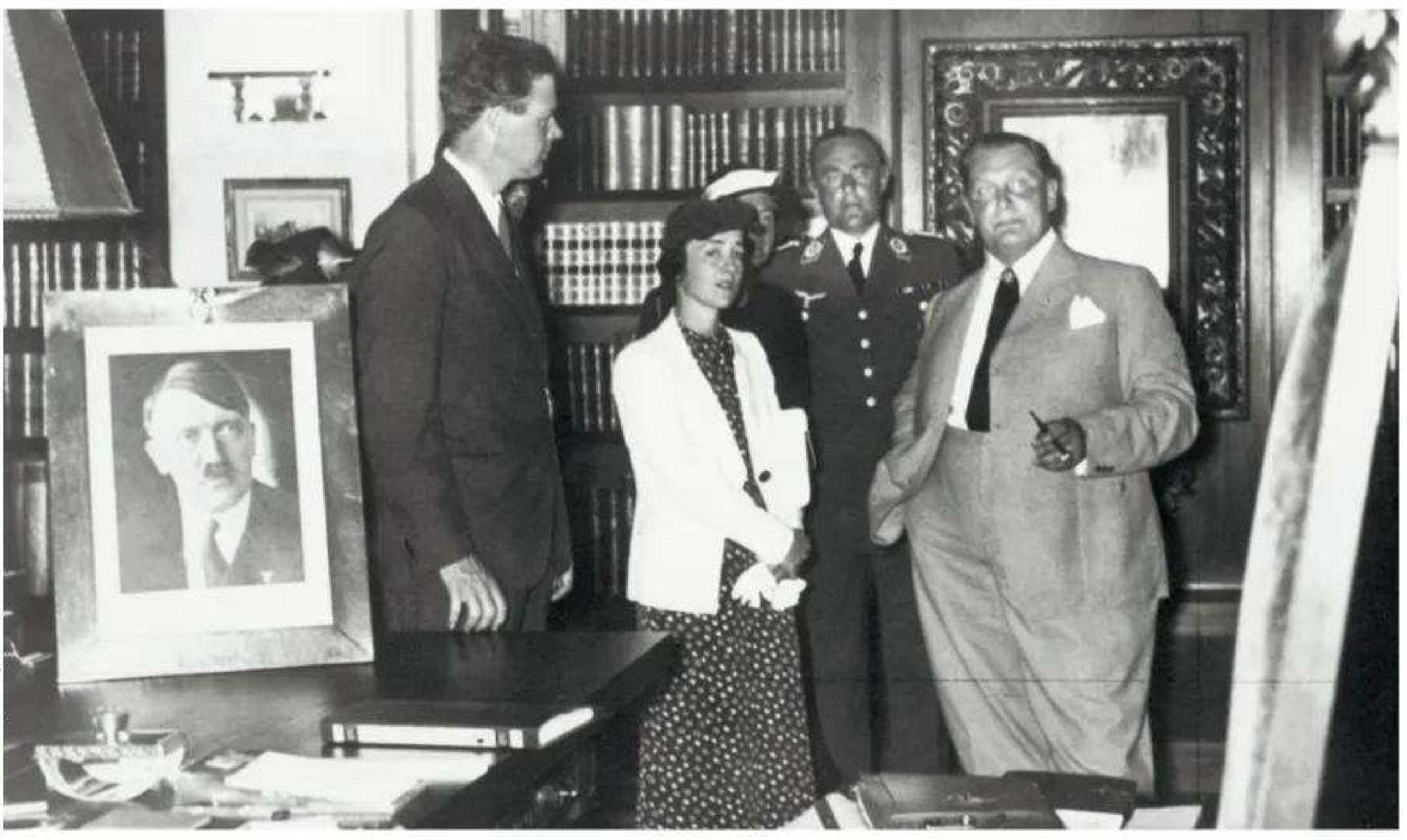
What would have been the impact of Lindbergh as president?
His policies would definitely have kept America out of war in Europe, and they would have been policies that did not help Britain. If Britain had been left unaided, I think Germany would have eventually taken her. No way would a President Lindbergh have provided any sort of aid to Britain – no materials, ships or arms. Certainly not man power. He saw Britain as part of the problem and even blamed it in his America First speeches for causing the war. So he definitely would not have created policies, as FDR did, to help Britain. In fact, I think he would have formed policies that aided Germany, perhaps even that formed a trade alliance between Germany and the United States.

As for American Jews, I don't know. He blamed Jews for causing the problems but he did not agree with the Nazis' approach. So I don't think he would have rounded up America's Jews. Still, I doubt he would have done anything to help Europe's Jews. He would have stated that what happens in Germany is their business. A President Lindbergh could have changed the course of history in a really big way. Britain would have lost the war and Germany would've been America's economic ally. And in the United States, fascism would have taken hold. Remember, Lindbergh thought Hitler was a visionary and his wife Anne called fascism "the wave of the future". I think he would've imported some of those things he found impressive about Nazi Germany to the United States. Number-one, there would have been no free press under a Lindbergh presidency. He believed that the press sowed chaos and didn't tell the truth. He would have locked the press down and he would have clamped down on protesters too because he believed they sowed chaos. If there was one thing that Lindbergh loved about Germany it was its efficiency, regimentation and discipline. So those are all things I know for sure he would have attempted to implement had he become president.

BELOW
Lindbergh (centre) gives a 'Bellamy salute' to the American flag

BOTTOM
Lindbergh is entertained by Hermann Göring during his visit to Nazi Germany





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THE POSSIBILITY

1941

LEND-LEASE

As well as not joining the war, it's highly unlikely that had Lindbergh run for and won the presidency in 1940 that the Lend-Lease programme or something similar would have been instigated. Following Roosevelt's victory, in 1941 Winston Churchill appealed directly to the president requesting support, which initially led to the USA providing 50 navy destroyers in return for 99-year leases on British bases in the Caribbean and Newfoundland. However, soon more support was requested and so Roosevelt designed a programme that allowed the United States to lend or lease war supplies to any nation deemed to be "vital to the defence of the United States". Certainly, this programme would not have developed under Lindbergh and it's doubtful how long Britain would have been able to hold off Nazi Germany without this or other support.

1942

NO MORE FREE PRESS?

Lindbergh had a mixed relationship with the media. Initially, it was responsible for making him a worldwide sensation but following the death of his son at the hands of a kidnapper, the resulting media circus had a lasting impact. The perpetrator's attorney was paid for by media baron William Randolph Hearst's papers in return for exclusive story rights, and people even sold miniature souvenir 'Lindbergh Ladders', mimicking the one that was used during the kidnapping. This led to a deep loathing for the media within Lindbergh, and a more controlled media must have appealed to him.

1945

AMERICA FIRST

The America First Committee disbanded only three days after Pearl Harbor. In recent years, the phrase 'America First' has taken on a new meaning and has even been used by Donald Trump. Had the organisation continued it's impossible to say how we would view that phrase today.

What if...

THE DUNKIRK EVACUATION HAD FAILED?

In 1940 a vast rescue operation miraculously saved the majority of Britain's army, but what would failure have meant in the war against the Nazis?

INTERVIEW WITH

© Getty Images

Joshua Levine

Joshua Levine practised as a barrister before becoming an actor and writer. He has written several books on the subject of the two World Wars and served as the historical consultant on the 2017 film *Dunkirk*.

Between 26 May and 4 June 1940, a vast operation took place to rescue thousands of British troops from northern France. The Germans' rapid advance through the difficult and hilly terrain of the Ardennes had outflanked the British forces. Realising that a continued attack would be hopeless, the British launched Operation Dynamo, a huge endeavour to rescue as many troops as possible. The improvised evacuation, involving hundreds of navy and civilian vessels, was nothing short of a miracle. It kept Britain in the war and paved the way for the eventual defeat of Nazi Germany. Yet the success of the operation was on a knife-edge – how might the future of both Britain and WWII have looked had it failed?

What happened leading up to the evacuation of troops at Dunkirk? Why was it necessary?

The British Expeditionary Force arrived in France at the beginning of the war and the expectation was that there would be a confrontation. The Germans, it was believed, would be attacking through Belgium and, initially, the British Expeditionary Force wasn't allowed to advance into Belgium – the Belgians were remaining neutral because they didn't want to provoke the Germans. When the German attack arrived, in May 1940, it came in Belgium as expected, and the British duly moved forward to the River Dyle, where the two sides met. What was expected was a standoff with two armies facing each other across a series of trenches, much like the previous war. But the Germans were simultaneously mounting another attack further south. They did not attack along the Maginot Line, a series of heavily fortified defences built along their border with France. Instead, the Germans launched a daring attack through the Ardennes, a hilly, forested area that was not considered ideal at all for tanks. The area was barely defended and the Germans moved quickly through it. By 20 May, German tanks had reached the French coast. After little more than a week, the Germans had almost surrounded the British Expeditionary Force.

Can you explain the plan for the Dunkirk evacuation?

Basically, there was no plan! It was never anticipated that the army would need rescuing. The evacuation was improvised by Admiral Bertram Ramsay from Dover Castle, where he could literally see across to the French coast. The initial idea was to bring soldiers back from Dunkirk harbour. Ships would be sent directly into the harbour but the Luftwaffe quickly put it out of action. And this is where improvisation reached its height. If you can't lift people from the harbour, what can you do? Well, there's the 10 miles of shallow beaches stretching from France into Belgium. In theory, people could be taken directly off the beaches, but the problem was that the bigger naval and transport ships couldn't get close enough – so initiative was needed. For example, the Royal Engineers used discarded lorries and drove them out into the water, where they were tethered together and a walkway built on top allowing them

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RIGHT Admiral Bertram Ramsay (left), who organised the evacuation, watches Allied aircraft over the Normandy coast in 1944

Main image sources: © Alamy, © Getty Images

THE PAST

1940

HITLER'S HALT ORDER

Just as his troops were ready to move onto the beaches at Dunkirk, Adolf Hitler gave the order for them to halt the advance and left the attack to the Luftwaffe. For years this order has generated controversy. It was suspected for a long time that it might have been given out of a sense of mercy and that Hitler suspected a show of force would now push Britain into making peace. However, Hermann Göring insisted the Luftwaffe be given the honour of finishing off the British Army. Hitler relented and halted the movement of the Panzers outside Dunkirk. Partly this was due to tank losses and the worry this could leave the left flank of the advance vulnerable. This decision would give the British troops valuable time to stage the evacuation.

1912-40

FROM THE TITANIC TO DUNKIRK

One of the men who captained a 'little ship' during the evacuation of British troops at Dunkirk was Charles Lightoller, the surviving second officer of the Titanic, which had sunk in 1912. Lightoller survived the sinking when, as the ship plunged under water, he found himself trapped but was saved when a boiler explosion in the bowels of the ship released a blast of hot air that pushed him to the surface. He then stood on top of an upturned lifeboat with some other surviving passengers, constantly shifting their weight so as not to capsize the little boat, until they were rescued. Pictured here with his son, who also assisted in the evacuation, the 66-year-old Lightoller managed to rescue some 130 British soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk in his 58ft private motor yacht, The Sundowner. Lightoller would live out the rest of his days running a small boatyard and constructing boats for the river police. In 1952 he would pass away of heart disease.

to be used as makeshift jetties. And a lot of smaller boats and ships were needed to lift people off the beaches, so plenty of boat owners around southern England found that their boats were suddenly whisked away. For me, the most impressive improvisation was by a man called Captain William Tennant, who was the senior naval officer ashore in Dunkirk. When he got there on 27 May he realised something had to be done to get people off in larger numbers, because significant numbers of soldiers were starting to arrive inside the Dunkirk perimeter. Captain Tennant spotted the large East Mole; this was a mile-long breakwater, it wasn't a jetty. Ships never came alongside it. But Tennant brought a huge ferry alongside and soldiers found ways to clamber on board. It worked brilliantly.

How integral were the 'little ships' to the evacuation?

There is an idea that ordinary people got in their private little motor boats and came over to Dunkirk, and to some small extent that did happen. A man called Charles Lightoller, who had been the senior surviving officer on board the Titanic, took his own little boat across. But for the most part these 'little ships' were requisitioned in a hurry by the Royal Navy and a lot of their owners thought they had been stolen. As a result, there were civil actions against the Navy for people who lost their boats that carried on for years afterwards! These little ships started arriving in large numbers on 30 May. However, it should be remembered that these ships were, for the most part, not taking people back to England but carrying them from the shore to the larger ships. Their primary role was to ferry people off the beaches.

Could the evacuation have failed?

There was every chance it could have failed. Churchill initially hoped that 30,000 soldiers would get away and in the end 338,000 made it off the beaches. There were an incredible number of things which allowed people to escape. Firstly, there was the successful defence of the roads to Dunkirk and then the defence of the perimeter around Dunkirk by both British and French troops – many of whom were sacrificing themselves for the greater good. Then there was the generally calm sea and the frequent cloud cover. These were strokes of luck, as was the infamous 'Halt Order' that stopped German tanks in their tracks for several crucial days. A little-known scientific process known as 'degaussing' kept hundreds of ships safe from German magnetic mines. You've got the efforts of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, and the work of the little ships. People often forget the work being done by the Royal Air Force. All of these things came together. They're all immensely important and without one or more of them it could all have been different.

If Dunkirk had failed what could the effect on the war have been?

Britain would have almost certainly been forced to seek terms with Germany. Lord Halifax was keen to pursue some kind of negotiation. If Britain had made peace, it would have become – as Churchill said at the time – a slave state. It would

BELOW
Stranded troops on the beaches at Dunkirk during the evacuation in 1940

SOUTHERN
RAI
RETURN TO HENRY TELFER
RETURN TO HENRY TELFER

© Getty Images

have meant that the war as we know it wouldn't have taken place. Without Britain to preserve freedom and the rule of law then the norms of Nazi Germany would simply have bled right across Europe. Would America still have entered the war? Where would the second front have come from without Britain as a base to get back into Europe? Would Europe have ever been liberated? In America there's a tendency to think of Dunkirk as a sort of parochial little British story that took place before the Americans and the Russians got involved and the real war started. And that's not right. The influence of Dunkirk on the world in which we live is beyond imagination.

What could the failure of the evacuation have meant to Britain?

The evacuation gave rise to an idea known as 'Dunkirk Spirit' which is still bandied about constantly. But in the summer of 1940 it was real and it was organic. The soldiers came home and most were embarrassed. They thought of themselves as the remnants of a battered army, so they were amazed to be treated as heroes by civilians. People were buying them drinks in pubs and slapping them on the back. Families were happy that their sons, brothers and husbands had come home but also they were just relieved that Britain hadn't lost the war. That relief gave rise to a spontaneous release of emotion. Mass Observation reports from the time said that this sudden release of feeling after Dunkirk would rouse the nation. In the immediate aftermath of the evacuation, politicians in the Cabinet started talking about war aims and what they wanted Britain to be like after the war. *The Times* published an editorial saying British life should no longer be based on privilege but on democracy and freedom. Factory output increased massively. I believe Dunkirk was a turning point that led to the post-war social national overhaul. This is what eventually led to the NHS, free education, to all these measures which grew out of the war. The post-war consensus of making life better for people was kickstarted by Dunkirk and had this not happened, I think it's very possible that these post-war measures would not have come about.

TOP
Evacuated troops arrive at Addison Road station and enjoy refreshments

ABOVE
Troops wade into the water to board rescue ships

THE POSSIBILITY

1940

PEACE WITH GERMANY?

Had the Dunkirk evacuation failed and almost the entirety of the British Expeditionary Force been captured in France, then it is more than likely that Britain would have been forced to sue for peace with Nazi Germany. Some in the British Government, such as Lord Halifax, had seen this as a viable option and it was during the May 1940 Cabinet Crisis that he pushed for this. Following the crisis, Halifax found himself in America as Churchill's ambassador. If Operation Dynamo had failed, would this plan have become a reality?

1945

NO SOCIAL REFORMS?

Following the end of the war, it was not Winston Churchill whom the British public chose to lead them but Labour's Clement Attlee, whose programme of social reforms remains influential to this day. The National Insurance Act (1946) introduced social security, and nationalisation acts of coal (1946), electricity and transport (1947) nationalised key parts of British industry. The Children's Act of 1948 introduced a comprehensive child care system for orphaned and poor children. Arguably the most progressive British government ever, Attlee's five-year term is one whose positive effects we are still feeling today. As Joshua Levine describes, without Dunkirk these reforms may have never have occurred.

1948

NO NHS?

Perhaps the most important of Attlee's reforms was the creation of the National Health Service (NHS), which came into being in 1948. Some of the origins of the NHS originate directly following the Dunkirk evacuation, with William Beveridge's 1942 report that outlined societal problems to be faced following the end of the war. Attlee's Health Minister, Aneurin Bevan, expressed the desire that the new health system should be based on three major principles. Firstly that it be for everyone, secondly that it be free, and finally that it would be based on need and not ability to pay.

TORIES VOTED AGAINST IT

7x © Alamy

What if...

GERMANY HAD INVADED BRITAIN?

Following Dunkirk, Hitler has a window of opportunity to deal a humiliated Britain a devastating blow

INTERVIEW WITH

© G Corrigan

Major JGH Corrigan MBE FRHistS

Gordon Corrigan served for nearly 40 years as an officer of the Royal Gurkha Rifles. He is the author of a number of books and eBooks, including the highly acclaimed one-volume *The Second World War – A Military History.*

With British forces licking their wounds and desperately trying to resurrect their pride after the retreat from Dunkirk, it was time for Hitler to weigh his options. If he could persuade the British to remain neutral and out of his way, that would save both time and valuable resources. But them agreeing to that was far from certain. Following his duplicitous dealings over the Munich Agreement and a more hardline prime minister in charge, Hitler's credibility carried no weight. To eliminate British opposition through invasion would at least give him the assurance that, when he set his sights on Soviet Russia, he would not have to be watching his back. But would it be an audacious, and unnecessary, step too far?

At what stage of the war would the chance of success have been at its greatest and why?
We know, from the German planning, that an invasion could not have succeeded. Generaloberst Franz Halder, chief of the general staff of the German army, says in his diary that he knew an invasion could not succeed when his staff informed him that they would need to transport 60,000 horses in the first lift. The German navy knew that they could not prevail against the Royal Navy, and the suggestion that troops could be conveyed by Rhine barges, rather than non-existent landing craft was dismissed as impracticable across the Channel. The Luftwaffe had to admit that they could not achieve air superiority across the Channel. Hermann Göring said that if he had three airborne divisions to throw across in 1940 he could have done it, but he only had one airborne division, and even three would have withered on the vine when they could not be reinforced. However, for the purpose of this article let us assume that the assets for Operation Sea Lion were available to the German armed forces. In that case the best time to invade would have been after the Dunkirk evacuation in June 1940, when although the Royal Navy had lifted around 400,000 troops from the beaches of France, most of their heavy equipment – artillery pieces, tanks, vehicles – had to be left behind, and there was only one fully equipped division in England.

What tactics and resources would be required to succeed?
Firstly, the Germans would have had to obtain air superiority over the Channel so that the invasion fleet could not be attacked by the Royal Air Force. This might have been achieved if the Luftwaffe had been able to knock out the Chain Home radar system and the airfields and aircraft factories. The Chain Home system – which was very vulnerable to air attack – gave early warning of the approach of German bombers, giving the RAF fighters time to get airborne and take position above the bomber stream. Had the Luftwaffe kept on attacking the same airfields and factories, rather than trying to attack too many and not returning to those first attacked, thus giving the British time to repair bomb damage, they could have overcome the RAF. Secondly, the German navy would have required landing craft or troop transport of some sort capable of coping with the unpredictable weather in the Channel.

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RIGHT
Hermann Göring was convinced he could take on the RAF and win

OP. KARTE CHEF
Geheime Kommandosache!
„Chefsache"!
16 ARMEE
9 ARMEE
6 ARMEE
NSDAP
DEUTSCHLAND
ERWACHE

THE PAST

JUNE 1940

ON THE BACK FOOT

Following the famous, and miraculous, rescue of hundreds of thousands of troops from the beaches of Dunkirk, Britain may have had an army back on home soil, but it was an army with very little to fight with. With much of its heavy armour abandoned in France, the army was drastically and dangerously under resourced. More than once, Hitler had alluded to an invasion of Britain that would remove it from the game and allow him to fulfil his plans in the East. But there were obvious obstacles to overcome; the Royal Navy and the RAF.

AUGUST 1940

UNCONVINCED AND UNPREPARED

Much against the advice and expectation of his generals, Hitler instigated plans for the invasion of Britain, codenamed Operation Sea Lion. There seemed very little appetite for such a move amongst Hitler's experienced staff. The sheer logistics of an invasion were against the Germans. This was not Blitzkrieg across open country, but a desperate dash across open water with the Royal Navy waiting in the wings. They were woefully under-equipped and under-trained for what was an extremely ambitious undertaking. But if invasion was to happen it had to be before the weather got too bad. And Hitler was impatient to start his campaign in Russia.

JUNE 1940 – APRIL 1941

BATTLE FOR THE SKIES

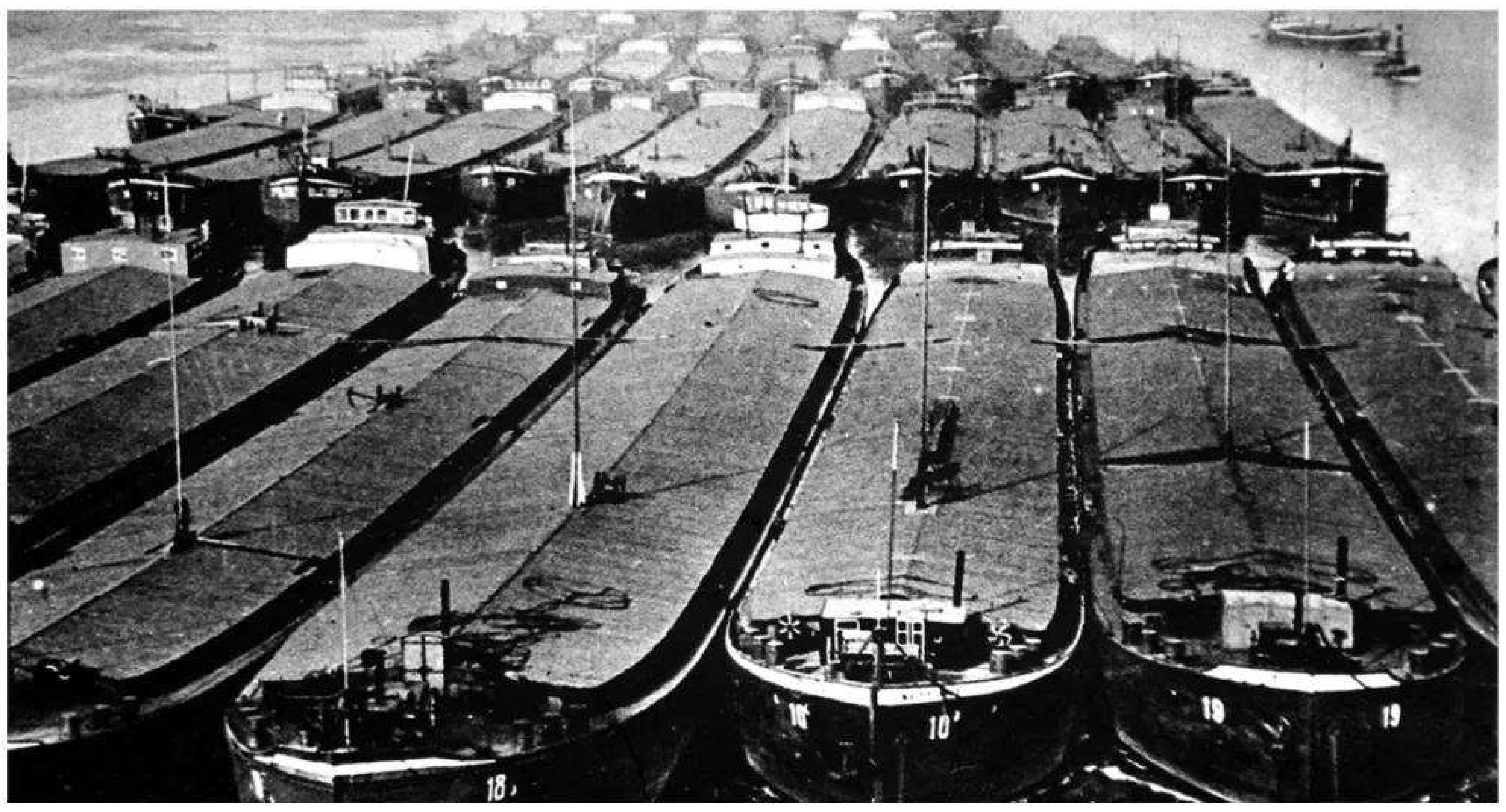
In order for any invasion plan to be successful the Luftwaffe had to own the skies over Britain. Air Marshal Hermann Göring assured Hitler that his aircraft could both neutralise the effectiveness of the Royal Navy and eliminate the RAF from the skies. Initially bombing raids were against air bases and ports, as well as radar stations and aircraft factories. Britain had just over 600 frontline fighter aircraft, vastly outnumbered by the Luftwaffe. And yet technology such as radar and superior aircraft were to tip the balance in favour of the British. By August the Luftwaffe had lost 600 aircraft, whilst the RAF had lost 260. By September 1940 Hitler ordered Operation Sea Lion to be put on hold and his attention turned to the Soviet Union.

ABOVE The British people waited to see what Hitler's next move would be

Ideally, the invasion force should land on the beaches between Folkestone and Margate, but it might be that a Luftwaffe airborne division could have captured a port, probably Dover, allowing troop transports to dock in the absence of landing craft. As the infantry divisions in the German army were horse drawn, they would have had to land sufficient Panzer divisions to give them mobility and firepower once ashore. As most of the German armour was suffering from track mileage problems after the Battle of France, a mammoth logistic effort (at which the Germans were very good) would have been required.

How would the invasion be consolidated and secured and what would any resistance look like?
Once ashore the important thing would be to get off the beach as soon as possible and go for London. If the capital, as the seat of government and the residence of the king, were captured then the rest would be simply mopping up. The German army was trained to fight a war of manoeuvre and to avoid sieges, so they would probably reduce London from the air and by artillery fire before sending troops in. Resupply and evacuation of battle casualties would require the sea route across the Channel to be kept open, a mammoth task for the German navy against a numerically far superior Royal Navy. That notwithstanding, once it looked as if the invasion was going to succeed then the navy would withdraw to Canada, along with the royal family. Despite the inspiring rhetoric of Churchill, once the one Canadian division in England and the British divisions being re-equipped after Dunkirk had been overcome - as they would have been - resistance would be minimal. The myth of the Home Guard - boys and old men equipped with a variety of obsolete weapons - is just that, a myth. The groups that were supposed to lie low and emerge to attack the Germans in the rear would have achieved nothing, and most of the pill boxes and bunkers built over southern England were of no tactical use, only built to make the civilian builders feel they were contributing to the war effort.

What impact would it have on Hitler's overall plans for the war?
Without having to worry about Britain the Germans could have concentrated all their resources against the Soviet Union. The North African campaign would not have happened, nor would there be the



battle for Crete or the need to defend Sicily and Italy. Some troops would have had to have been stationed in England to deal with any clandestine resistance, but Spain would by now have joined the war on Germany's side (Franco consistently told Hitler that once England was dealt with he would join, but in the meantime he needed England's trade). Some waverers would also declare for Germany, including Vichy France and possibly Turkey. South Africa might well forswear its position in the British Empire and overthrow Prime Minister Smuts and the pro-British government. Given that, and the absence of the Royal Navy Arctic Convoys supplying the USSR, Germany would almost certainly defeat Russia or at the very least bring it to the negotiating table.

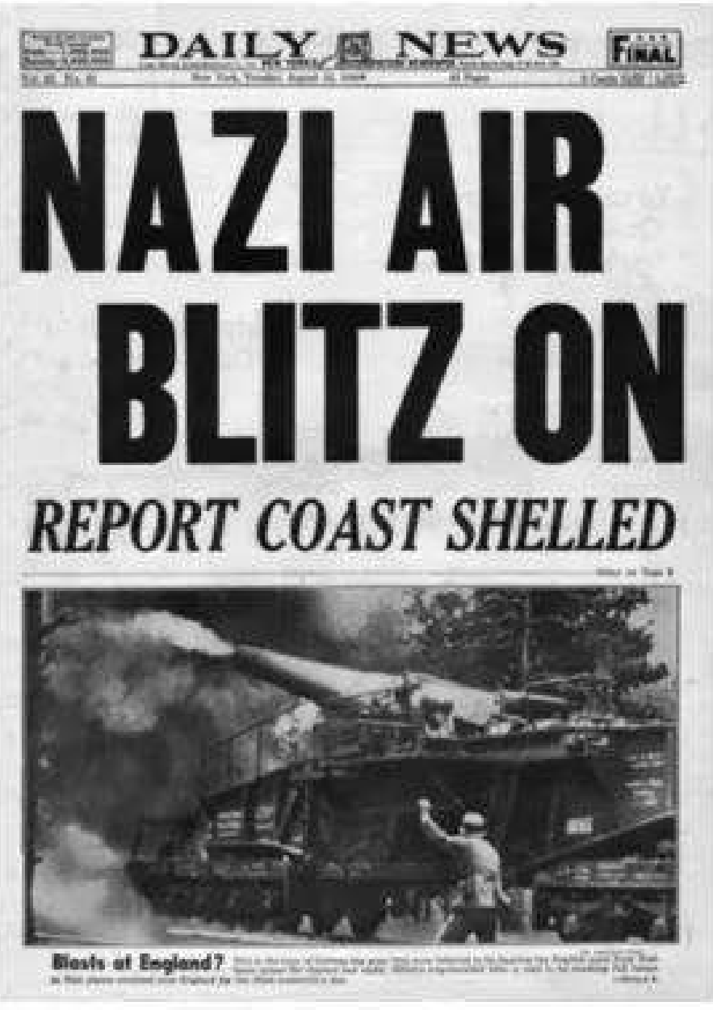
TOP
British Forces were drilled in readiness for an invasion

ABOVE
German river barges were part of the plan to cross the Channel

BELOW
The German bombing campaign was absolutely relentless

Where would the USA stand?

The US ambassador to the UK, Joseph Kennedy (father of JFK), had consistently reported to Washington that the UK would lose the war, and that the USA should remain neutral. With a successful invasion he would have been vindicated (in reality he was out of step with FDR and recalled in November 1940). There was, and is, a strong tendency towards isolationism in the USA and in any case, the USA was far more concerned about Japanese intentions than those of Germany. Whether the US would have recognised the rump British government in Canada is a moot point – it probably would have – but might well have demanded the ceding, or at least the leasing, of the ships of the Royal Navy, with or without their crews, in return. The US would not have declared war on Germany in support of a defeated Britain. With the UK out of the war there would have been no need for Hitler to declare war on the USA (as in reality he did in December 1941), and the US would only have had to concern itself with the Japanese. As the Japanese would be able to occupy Burma, Hong Kong, Singapore, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Asian colonies without fighting for them and thus have access to the raw materials they lacked in their homeland, they need not have provoked war with the USA. Although the USA opposed the Japanese invasion of China they would be unlikely to go to war over it, and the Pacific War would never have happened.



DAILY NEWS

FINAL

NAZI AIR BLITZ ON

REPORT COAST SHELLED

Blasts at England?

What would post-invasion Britain look like?

With Western Europe, the UK and the USSR conquered, and without any involvement in the Pacific, German occupation would have been firm, but as in the Channel Islands, fair. In due time the NSDAP would have ditched their more extreme policies and Hitler would eventually have died in his bed to be replaced by a more amenable dictator. Edward VIII might have been persuaded to reoccupy the throne, provided the Germans recognised his wife as queen, and some local autonomy would have been permitted.

It is debatable whether German policy towards the Jews would be applied in the UK. In the German-occupied Channel Islands, Jews with German nationality were removed to concentration camps, but those with British nationality were left unmolested. Germany would continue the work that the British had already done on the development of the atomic bomb but had not had time to pass to the USA, and would have developed nuclear weapons at least by the 1950s, well in advance of any American development of the same. On balance, Europeans and Britons, with the exception of those of the Jewish faith, would have been better off under National Socialist Germany than under Russian rule.

THE POSSIBILITY

1941 ONWARDS

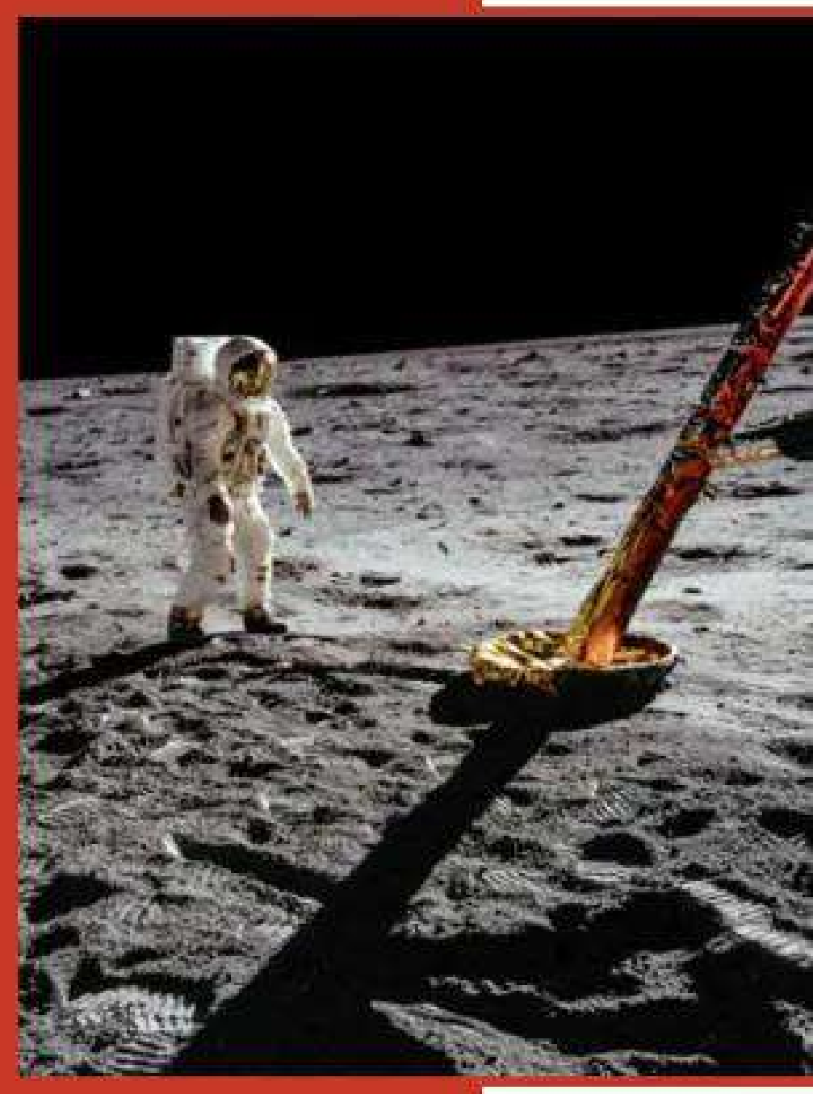
THE CURTAIN FALLS

With the invasion and eventual oppression of the Soviet Union, Russia as a nation would have been in no position to rival the USA as a world power and so the Cold War would never evolve, and the 'Iron Curtain' never be raised across Europe. Instead, it would be the German Empire that rose to the dizzy and dangerous heights of a super power with unrivalled control over Europe. It would be Hitler's German Empire, with British and French colonies added to its own, that would become a true global power in a constant and dangerous standoff with the USA.

1945 ONWARDS

REACH FOR THE STARS

Following their success in the field of rocket technology, Germany would be in a strong position to develop it further in weaponry and warfare. By retaining Wernher von Braun and his team, thereby denying the US access to such scientists and their work, the German Empire may well have continued on a similar trajectory to that followed by the USA and USSR. It may have been a German satellite to be the first human-made object in space, and a German boot to be the first to step onto the surface of the Moon.



1941 ONWARDS

NO 'NAM

With a successful invasion of Britain by Hitler, Japan would see its fair share of the spoils of war. With Britain and France neutralised by Germany, inheriting British and French colonies without a shot being fired would mean there would be no need to confront the USA, in effect making a war in the Pacific pointless. And with Japan in direct or indirect control of French Indochina the events which were to lead to the war in Vietnam may never have come about, and the dynamic of US domestic and foreign politics in the 1960s would have taken a very different turn.

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What if...

BRITAIN SURRENDERED IN 1940?

Nazi victory over Britain would have had a profound impact on the course of World War II

INTERVIEW WITH

© C Hall

Dr Charlie Hall

Dr Charlie Hall is senior lecturer in modern European history at the University of Kent and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. His first book is *British Exploitation of German Science and Technology, 1943-1949.*

In the spring of 1940, Nazi Germany launched its devastating campaign into Western Europe. Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France all fell in quick succession. German forces also developed plans for Operation Sea Lion – an invasion of the British Isles. For a short while, the future of Britain, and of the Allied war effort at large, stood on a knife-edge. Had Britain surrendered, or been occupied, the consequences would have been enormous.

How strong was the political and public support for making peace with Hitler during 1939-40?

During the 1930s, the appeasement of Hitler enjoyed extensive public support in Britain. However, following the Nazi invasion of the Czechoslovak rump state in March 1939, and then Poland in September, the British public generally recognised that Germany could only be stopped by force and began to face the grim prospect of another European war.

This attitude was badly shaken by the rapid German advances and the impending defeat of France in May 1940. At that point, the foreign secretary, Viscount Halifax, urged Britain to sue for peace with Germany, using the still-neutral Mussolini as an intermediary. The new prime minister, Winston Churchill, was determined to fight on. Through some shrewd politicking, and the support of both Labour and his predecessor, Neville Chamberlain, Churchill emerged triumphant.

Churchill's success in Whitehall was matched by progress in the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the harbour and beaches at Dunkirk. Taken together, this stiffened the British public's determination to fight. Had Halifax's peace proposal been pursued, it is likely it would only have had a small minority of the public behind it.

Is there anything that could have shifted opinion towards an Anglo-German peace treaty?

Britain's engagement with the affairs of mainland Europe has always been defined by its geography. As an island, the risk of invasion is considerably lower. While a Nazi invasion of the British Isles remained a distant possibility, the likelihood of surrender was correspondingly slim. However, had military developments made invasion more likely, the appetite for a negotiated exit from hostilities may have grown exponentially in Britain.

The most critical of these developments would have been any serious blow to the Royal Navy, as this offered the principal line of defence against invasion. Other possibilities, such as the failure of the Dunkirk evacuation or the Luftwaffe achieving air superiority over the UK, could have had a similar effect. Likewise, concomitant challenges to the British Empire, such as a Japanese attack in Asia or assertions of neutrality from the Dominions, would have undermined British confidence and perhaps reopened peace negotiations.

Did Nazi Germany have a plan for the occupation of the British Isles in the event of victory over the UK?

A Nazi invasion of the British Isles was never more than an extremely distant possibility. Hitler and most senior Nazis recognised this. Their preferred option

RIGHT Members of the Home Guard drilling in preparation for a Nazi invasion

Main image source: © Alamy, Getty Images

THE PAST

MAY-JUNE 1940

BEF SAVED FROM DUNKIRK

Between 26 May and 4 June 1940, 338,000 British and French troops, including the core of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), were successfully evacuated from the harbour and beaches at Dunkirk in northern France. This evacuation was hailed as being nothing short of a miracle. Churchill wasn't so quick to bask in glory, however, and instead warned that, "we must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory".

SUMMER 1940

BRITAIN'S SKIES ARE SECURED

Throughout the summer of 1940, the Luftwaffe mounted a major campaign to destroy the fighting capacity of the RAF and achieve air superiority over Britain. The aim was to force Britain to sue for peace or, failing that, to lay the groundwork for a seaborne invasion. The RAF and Fleet Air Arm resisted these efforts resolutely and claimed victory in the Battle of Britain.

1940

NAZI INVASION CANCELLED

While Hitler had hoped to force Britain to the negotiating table without having to launch a full-scale invasion, plans were nonetheless drawn up for a German amphibious assault on the south coast of England, known as Operation Sea Lion. However, following defeat in the Battle of Britain, and amid various other concerns, Hitler decided to postpone Sea Lion indefinitely and instead redirect troops to other fronts.

was to make Britain 'see the light', reach a peace settlement, and perhaps even become allies in future military actions. As a result, really detailed plans for occupation were not drawn up.

Nevertheless, from the outline plans that were made we can get a general sense of what Britain (and Ireland) would have looked like under Nazi occupation. To begin with, the Nazis were keen to split the country up into six sections, each with their own military command centre; other ideas were more substantive, such as detaching Scotland and creating a united Ireland.

The broader governmental plans would have likely followed the lines adopted in Nazi-occupied Europe. The Germans would have established a collaborationist civil administration by co-opting sympathetic British officials and politicians and tasking them with implementing policy directives from Berlin. This regime would have remained under the close supervision of the Nazi security forces, reinforced by a heavy military presence.

Which military and/or political figures were likely to be involved in a British collaborationist government?
Top of Hitler's list for the head of a British puppet government was Oswald Mosley. The leader of the British Union of Fascists had fallen under the Führer's spell in the 1930s and was interned by the British authorities in May 1940, amid concerns he might lead fifth column activities against the war effort.

There were many British politicians who had dabbled in fascism before the war and who showed a fondness for the Third Reich. This even extended into the monarchy – the Duke of Windsor (formerly Edward VIII) visited Germany, met Hitler, and supported appeasement.

Nonetheless, few of these figures would have welcomed a Nazi occupation of Britain. Any regime the Nazis established in Britain would have been (correctly) viewed as a foreign imposition and would have received very little domestic support. As with other occupied territories, though, apathy and resignation, suffused with fear, may have proved the most widespread response.

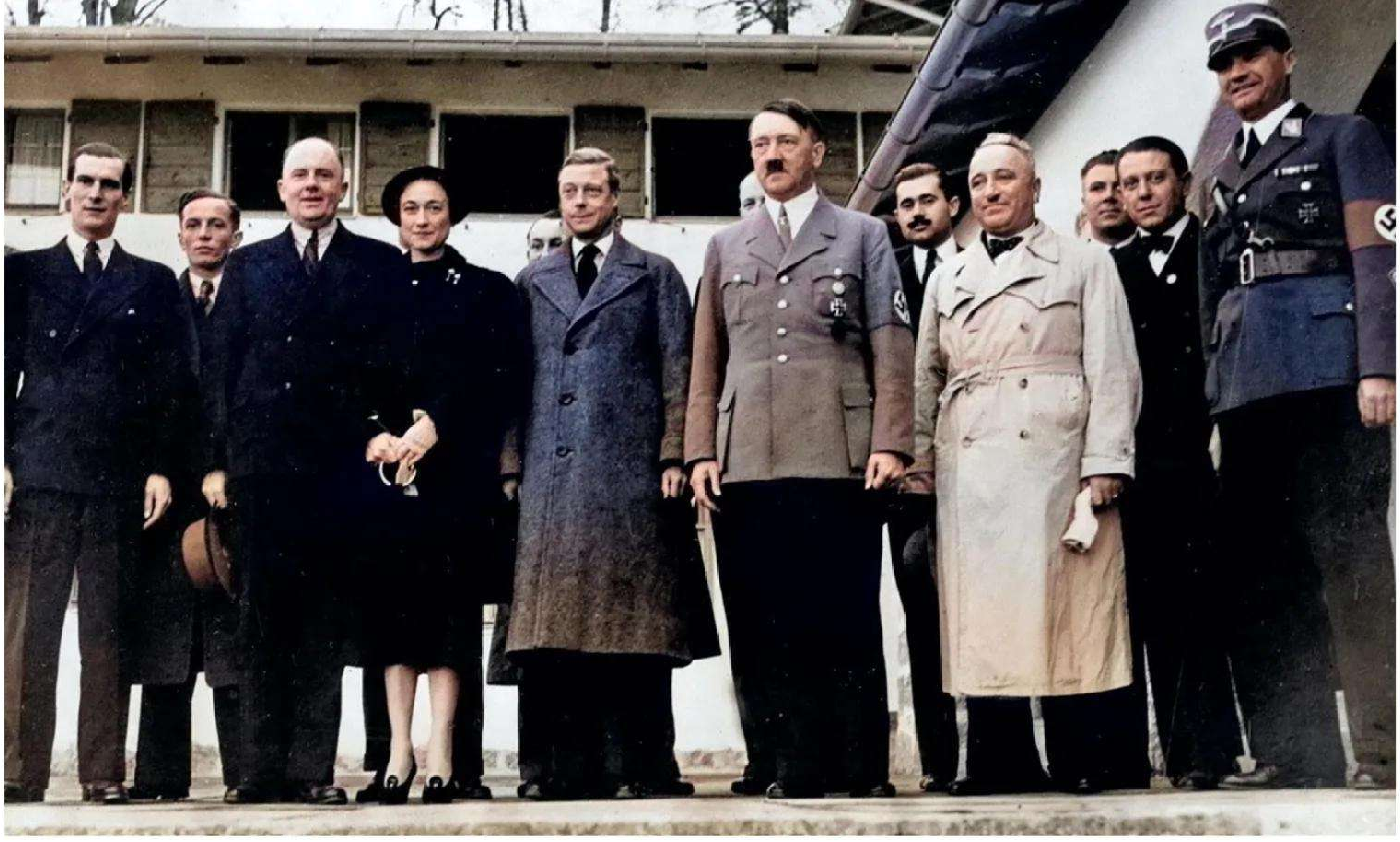
Would civil and military resistance to the occupation and collaboration have been strong or limited?
In the early days of occupation, resistance would have been fierce. If the British government, and by extension the public, had decided to continue fighting, German forces would have faced a bloody struggle to subjugate the British Isles. Civilians and soldiers, no doubt aided by whatever survived of the Royal Navy, would have worked together and offered a stubborn defence.

ABOVE
Winston Churchill and Neville Chamberlain in 1940

If this subjugation were completed, however, the scale and ferocity of resistance would have been shaped by the character of the occupation. A harsh and intrusive administration would have faced vigorous resistance, and vice versa. In any case, this would have taken a variety of forms, from armed insurrection to industrial sabotage to the passive maintenance of British institutions and ideals.

Any resistance would have likely benefitted from supply and support from overseas, especially the Dominions and perhaps the USA. Overextended German forces would have found it increasingly challenging to maintain order in all occupied territories (particularly Britain, given its distance from Germany and its island geography), while also fighting a conventional war in the East. Such difficulties may have ultimately proved too costly for the Nazi regime to bear.

Was there a plan for a British government-in-exile led by Churchill and King George VI?
Had Britain been invaded, the government and the royals would have remained in the country for as long as possible. This would have been vital for maintaining public morale and the armed forces' will to fight. Queen



Elizabeth famously said when asked about evacuating: “The children won’t go without me. I won’t leave the King. And the King will never leave.”

Nonetheless, a number of country houses were identified as possible refuges if they did have to leave London. Had Nazi forces reached the Midlands, a special army unit (the Coats Mission) would have transported the royals to Liverpool, and a navy ship would then have carried them to Canada. A stately home in British Columbia – Hatley Castle – was purchased in 1940 to serve as a royal residence if necessary.

Churchill and his cabinet would also have fled Britain only as a last resort and again, Canada would have been the destination. The might of the Royal Navy and the size of the Empire would have made it very possible for Britain to continue a fairly substantial war effort, even if the UK itself was subjugated.

If Britain surrendered, how might Nazi ideology have influenced and changed British culture and society?

Any peace which followed a Nazi victory would have likely been temporary. Expansion and destruction were central facets of Nazism and there would have always been new enemies to fight. In addition, territories under its boot (including Britain) would not have remained quiescent for long. As such, Nazi rule in Britain would have been violent and deeply repressive for some time after the initial occupation.

Another key element of Nazism was its totalitarianism; it sought to control every aspect of the public and private sphere in any country it was active. Nazi-occupied Britain would have been no different. A free press would have been replaced by a colossal propaganda machine. All culture that did not conform to narrow Nazi ideals would have been banned.

Also, Jews and other ethnic minorities would have been persecuted relentlessly. Even a relatively short period of Nazi rule in Britain would have dramatically altered the social and cultural fabric of the country for a long time to come.

What would the ramifications of a British defeat or surrender have been on the war?

The German war machine would have been able to focus more resources against the Soviet Union. That campaign, which saw dramatic early successes followed by a drawn-out defeat, may have resulted in ultimate victory. Hitler would have been master of Europe.

It is unlikely, however, that this would have lasted for long. Growing unrest and resistance in occupied territories would have undermined this new Nazi dominion from within. There would have been external threats too, beginning with the British and French empires. Though the USA would probably have stayed out of the European war for longer had Britain been defeated, eventual conflict with the Third Reich would have been likely.

In any case, the escalating spiral of violence at the heart of Nazism would have finally consumed Germany itself. Nevertheless, the Third Reich may have survived a fair while longer had Britain been defeated, with catastrophic consequences for the people of Europe and beyond.

ABOVE
The Duke of Windsor photographed with Hitler in 1937

BELOW
Hatley Castle, Canada: a royal refuge in case of invasion

THE POSSIBILITY

SUMMER 1940

AIR FORCE AND NAVY DEFEATED

In preparation for an invasion, the Luftwaffe successfully knock the RAF out of the skies and subsequent bombing raids cause huge damage to infrastructure and cripple morale. At sea, a Kriegsmarine feint operation lures the Royal Navy Home Fleet north toward Scotland, while well-laid minefields in the Channel prevent British ships from interfering with the main invasion routes.

SEPTEMBER 1940

BRITISH ISLES INVADED

German troops, ferried across the Channel on specially modified barges, establish four beachheads in Kent and Sussex. Amounting to around 67,000 men (across nine divisions) and supported by 3,000 paratroopers, these forces secure key sites, including airfields and bridges. They also take control of the major ports of Folkestone and Newhaven, into which reinforcements and vital supplies can be transported.

1941

FASCIST PUPPET STATE ESTABLISHED

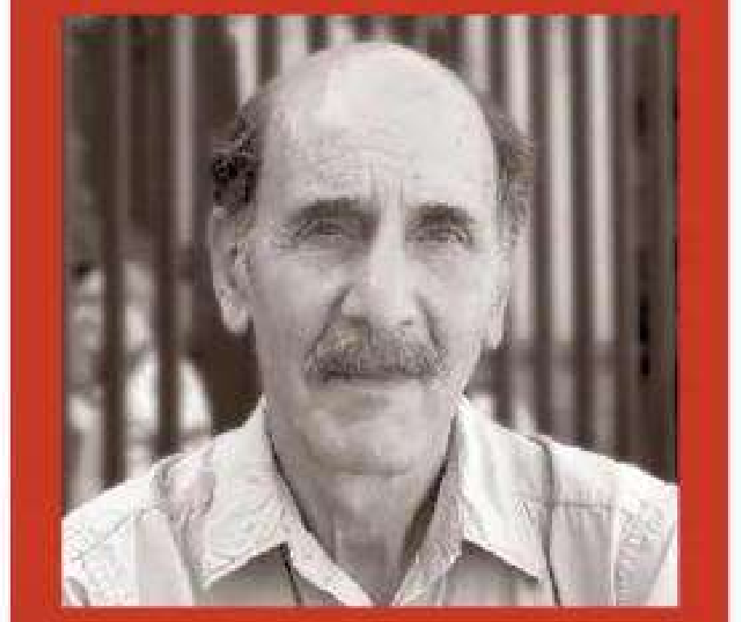
In the face of vicious fighting, London falls to the invaders. The royal family flee to Pitchford Hall in Shropshire, Churchill is captured, and other members of the government seek to continue the resistance from bases further north. Oswald Mosley is freed from prison and installed as head of a puppet regime, under direct control of the German occupying force. He immediately sues for peace.

What if...

FRANCO HAD JOINED THE AXIS?

A Spain allied with the Axis would have ruined the Allied campaign in the Middle East, but doomed the Francoist state to an earlier collapse

INTERVIEW WITH



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Jules Stewart

Jules is a veteran journalist, reporting from over 30 countries, including Spain where he worked for 20 years. He has published 12 books on a range of subjects including cultural and literary histories of Madrid.

As Hitler's army marched into Poland on 1 September 1939, beginning the war, the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco struggled to consolidate power in Madrid. His Nationalist Army had been heavily reliant on Nazi arms, tanks and planes to gain victory in the Spanish Civil War. Yet Franco did not fall in with the rest of fascist Europe to support the German war effort, instead taking a cautious and relatively neutral approach. The prospect of Spain joining the war remained a concern for the Allies throughout the war, terrified by the prospect of losing control of Gibraltar and, therefore, the Mediterranean.

What was the relationship between Francoist Spain and Nazi Germany during and after the end of the Civil War of 1936-39?

The first and only personal encounter between Franco and Hitler took place at the Hendaye railway station in German-occupied France in October 1940. A frustrated Hitler later told Benito Mussolini that he would rather have several teeth extracted than endure another meeting with Franco. Hitler had travelled to Hendaye to assess the impact that building a closer relationship with Spain might have on stability in Vichy France. No agreement was reached, simply because Hitler could not accept Franco's demands for handing over to Spain large parts of the French North African empire. That said, Hitler clearly saw Franco as a useful ally for increasing pressure on Britain and diverting part of the enemy's war efforts to the threat of hostilities with Spain. The Nazis provided Spain with arms, tanks, troops and Luftwaffe air support during the Spanish Civil War, which effectively ensured a Nationalist victory. The Germans were eager to test new equipment in the field. Spain also provided a convenient sideshow to distract Britain and France from Germany's skulduggery in Eastern Europe. After Franco's victory, in 1941 the Generalissimo approved the recruitment of Spanish volunteers to Germany on the guarantee that they only fight against the Soviet Union and not the Western Allies. Once the tide of war started to turn against the Axis, Franco, with a wink and a nod, cleverly adopted a policy of 'strict neutrality'.

Was Franco invited or pressured to join the Axis alliance prior to the outbreak of World War II? Why did Spain remain neutral?

Franco's gambit was always to err on the side of caution. Hitler became aware from the outset that the Generalissimo might play the role of a useful sympathiser to the Nazi cause, one worthy of material aid during the Spanish Civil War, but he held out little or no hope of recruiting the country as a belligerent in the European conflict. Franco set far too high a price on joining the Axis and the best Hitler could hope for was a policy of political support from an anti-Bolshevist bulwark south of the Pyrenees. Franco embraced a strategy of ideological support for Germany, while cautiously putting out the message that the Allies would not have to confront a Spanish army in the European war. Maintaining neutrality was essential if the government was to concentrate on rebuilding a country shattered by three years of internal destruction that had left Spain impoverished, with widespread

Main image source: © Alamy, Getty Images

RIGHT
Franco seen at a Condor Legion victory parade to celebrate Civil War victory

THE PAST

1939

FRANCOIST VICTORY IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

On 1 April 1939, Franco's forces entered Madrid and declared victory. However, three years of brutal civil war had left Spain impoverished and the new Francoist state was locked in an existential struggle for survival. Franco had also been forced to substantially reduce his military might, cutting three quarters of the Nationalist Army to free up men to rebuild the nation. The remaining army was reluctant to become involved in World War II, with a significant amount of the military leadership vehemently opposed to military intervention.

1940

DEPENDENCY ON THE ALLIES

Britain created a network of economic mutual interest with Spain, meaning Spain would face economic destitution if it cut ties with the Allies. Britain ensured Spain could only receive essential products from the Allies and the US. This economic reality prevented Spain from taking meaningful action against the Allies and Hitler had to settle with using Spain as an anti-communist defence to the south. Meanwhile, Spanish military leadership received bribes from Churchill totalling $13 million in order to ensure neutrality.

1940

DENYING THE WEHRMACHT MILITARY ACCESS

Germany was keen to take Gibraltar to enhance Axis power in the Mediterranean, so the Nazis attempted to negotiate using Spain as an invasion route. The Generalissimo briefly contemplated ways to allow the Wehrmacht through Spanish territory covertly, but quickly dropped the scheme. Franco refused to allow the Wehrmacht access, knowing that any such collaboration with the Nazis would pull Spain into the war.

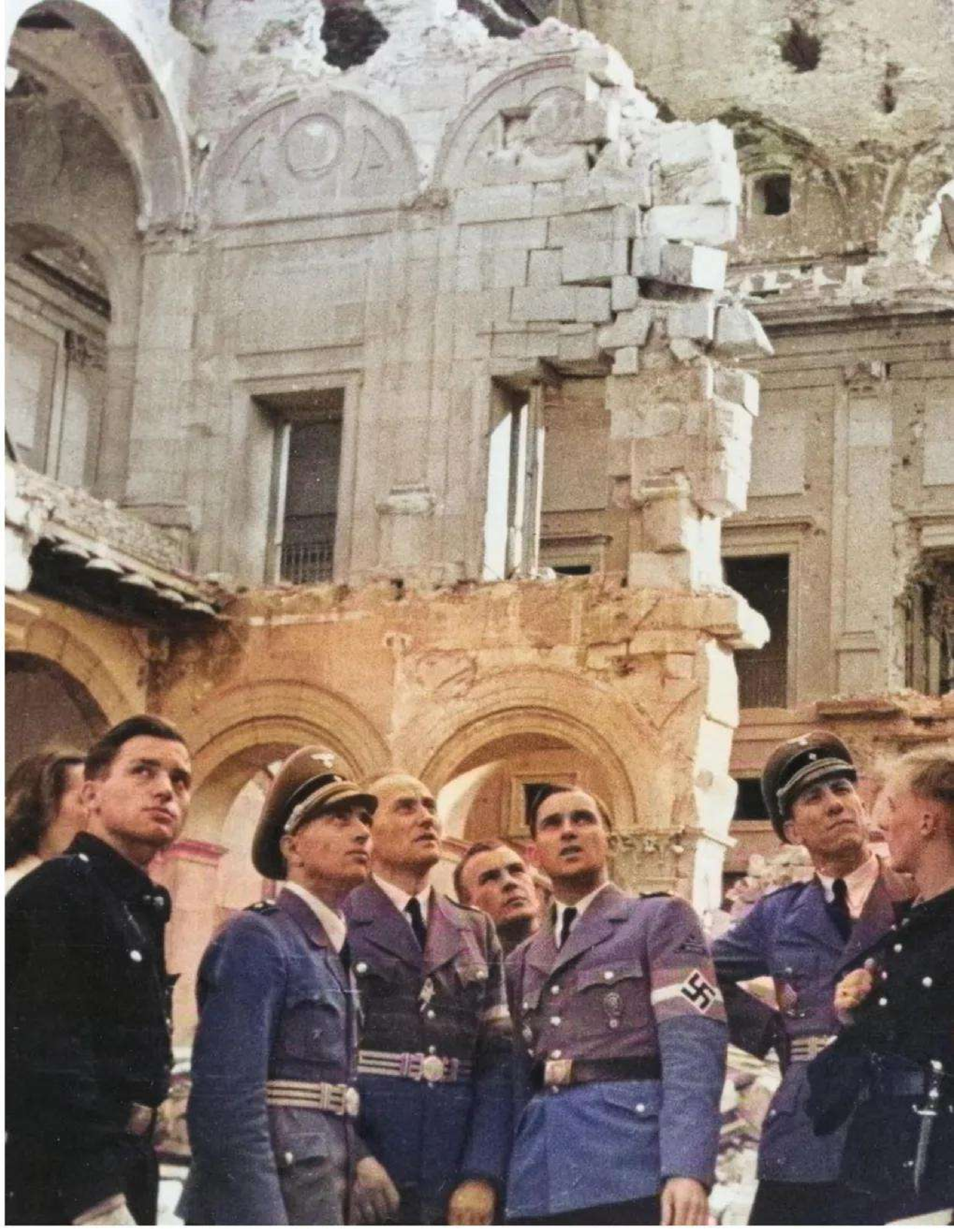
hunger among its people and its economy in ruins.

How much concern was there among the Allied nations that Spain would enter the war, even in a limited way?
There is no evidence of any undue concern among the Allies that Spain would enter the war on the Nazi side. Hitler's failure to bring Britain to its knees and open the country to invasion during the Blitzkrieg, along with the German army's disaster in Russia, made it obvious that the war's outcome was by no means a foregone conclusion. Yet it was imperative to take all possible measures to prevent Spain becoming a belligerent. From the beginning of the conflict the Allies, mainly Great Britain, deployed a number of policies to prevent closer relations between the Axis and Spain, thereby limiting the likelihood of entry in the war.

The Allies created a system of incentives to condition Spanish policy decisions. The British focused on building a network of mutual interests, thanks to which any breakup between the two countries would mean a key loss for Spanish trade and industry. This was a key factor in conditioning Spanish movements in the war. With the economic agreements in force between Spain and the UK from the autumn of 1940, Spain received products essential to its economic survival, which could only be obtained from Britain and the US. Spain essentially became inescapably dependent on British and Western Hemispheric sources of supply.

What was the state of the Spanish military at the outbreak of WWII?
At the end of the Civil War in 1939, Franco's Nationalist army consisted of roughly one million troops in 60 divisions. The need to free up workers and farmers to rebuild the country was a key factor in Franco's decision to dramatically reduce the size of the Spanish armed forces to some 250,000 men, most of them two-year conscripts.

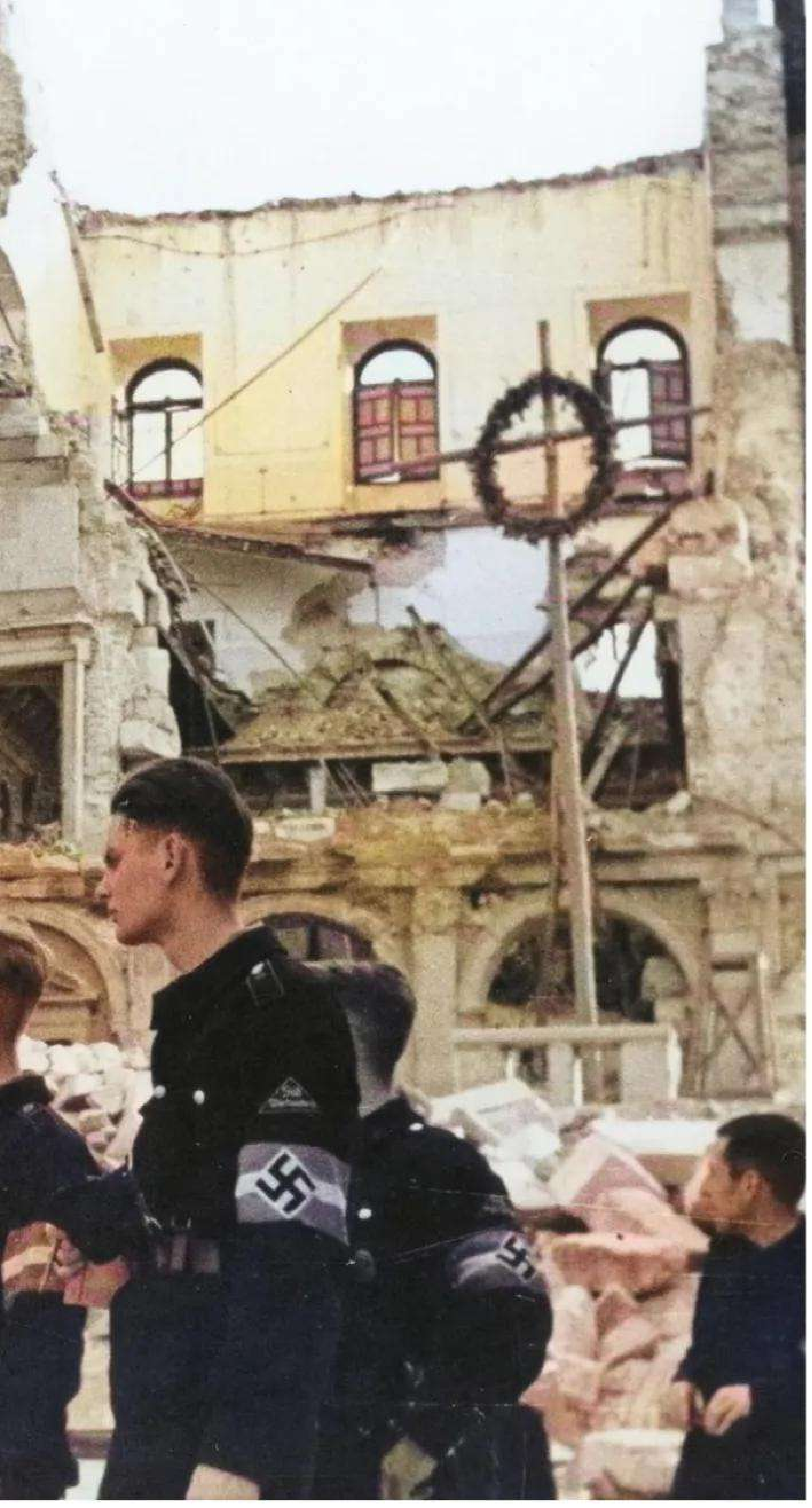
Once World War II broke out, Franco was obliged to consider his country's position vis-à-vis the two sides, as well as the threat of invasion from the Allies – or even Germany if Hitler decided to take control of his country. Thus Franco decided to reverse some of the military cutbacks. In 1942, alarmed by the Allied landings in North Africa, and the German occupation of Vichy France bringing hostilities closer to the Pyrenees, the Generalissimo ordered a partial mobilisation, which raised the number of troops to more than 750,000 men. The air force and navy were also strengthened, although less dramatically so than the land forces because of financial restrictions



ABOVE
A Hitler youth visit to the Alcazar in Toledo among Civil War ruins

If he allied Spain with the Axis, was there a possibility that Franco (perhaps with German or Italian support) could have successfully taken Gibraltar? How might its loss have affected Allied operations in the Mediterranean Sea in 1940-41?
In a letter written in February 1941 to Franco, Hitler said that an attack on Gibraltar and the closing of the Strait would have changed the Mediterranean situation in one stroke. The Führer was not alone in this assessment. Winston Churchill went to great pains to ensure that the Rock remained in British hands during the war. If Britain could not be crushed by aerial bombardment, then the enemy must be strangled into submission. That meant closing the Strait of Gibraltar.

With the fall of Gibraltar, the Axis would have obtained control of the whole Mediterranean, cut off the British Army in the Middle East and closed a whole future theatre of war. It would have dashed hopes of an ultimate Allied victory. Churchill came up with one of the most audacious gambits of the war: the distribution of $13 million in bribes to top-ranking Spanish military figures, who would ensure that Franco adhered



to his commitment to neutrality, if necessary by launching a coup d'état.

In all, eight top-echelon officials and a number of well-placed lower ranks were drawn into the operation. The bribes served their purpose. The recipients neutralised hardliners in the military ranks and Churchill could breathe easier.

What contribution might Franco's forces have made to the invasion of France? Could it have operated independently or might Spanish territory have been a staging ground for a third invasion route?

Franco never displayed an interest in taking control of French territory, especially once it became obvious that Spain was not going to be granted possession of France's North African territories. The Generalissimo decided unwaveringly against sanctioning a German army crossing into Spain. The Nazis wanted to use the country as an invasion route to Gibraltar, but Franco knew this would have left Spain open to attack by the Allies. He did contemplate at one point secretly allowing the Wehrmacht access and then raising a diplomatic protest, but this whimsical idea was summarily discarded once it became clear that a German victory was by no means assured.

Had Hitler scored a victory in Britain or Russia, it is possible that Franco would have deployed troops to the Pyrenees to act as a backup for German units. Moreover, there were a significant number of high-ranking Spanish Army officials who strongly opposed Spain's entry into the war.

ABOVE
Hitler shakes hands with Francisco Franco

How might entry into the Axis alliance have affected Spain internally – would there have been a second civil war or an Allied-backed insurgency against Franco?

Had Spain joined the war as an Axis ally, the short-term outcome would have been catastrophic for the country. Franco was faced with a dire internal situation of near economic collapse, demoralisation and an infrastructure that had been all but destroyed after three years of civil war. With the armed forces in control, there was no risk of a second civil war, yet the country could ill-afford to get involved in another armed conflict.

Longer term, however, the consequences would have been beneficial, in as much as it would have ended the Franco regime, as was the case with the Italian and German dictatorships. Spain would have avoided the political ostracism by the nations of Europe in the post-war years, up until Franco's death in 1975. Spain would have participated in the reconstruction of Europe and become a member of the United Nations and eventually the Common Market. Instead, an increasingly inept dictator kept the country under his tyrannical thumb for 40 years.

THE POSSIBILITY

1940-42

AXIS CONTROL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Had Spain joined the war, the British defenders of Gibraltar would have been in an impossible position and soon would have lost control. The Strait of Gibraltar would have closed, cutting off the British Army in the Middle East. Now isolated from the rest of the Allied forces, the nature of the Middle Eastern front would have fundamentally changed and Allied victory would have been very unlikely.

1940 ONWARDS

SPANISH ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

With Franco now an Axis state, Britain and the US would have cut economic ties. Repairing Spain's ruined economy and infrastructure would have become nearly impossible, relying heavily on whatever aid they could get from Germany. However, a second civil war would have been highly unlikely regardless of how horrendous the situation had gotten, because the Republican Army was thoroughly crushed after defeat in 1939.

FRANCO
FRANCO
FRANCO

1945

THE END OF FRANCOIST SPAIN

After the defeat of the Axis armies, the Spanish dictatorship would collapse alongside Mussolini and Hitler's regimes. Instead of suffering under Francoist rule until 1975, Spain could have become part of the post-war European reconstruction. It might have joined the United Nations in 1945 and the European Common Market in 1957.

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What if...

THE RAF LOST THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN?

The possible consequences of Britain's aerial defeat in 1940 have fascinated historians and perplexed military strategists for decades

INTERVIEW WITH

Image source: Andy Saunders

Andy Saunders

Andy is an author and researcher who specialises in the air war over Europe 1939-45, with a particular interest in the Battle of Britain. He was a founder and the first curator of Tangmere Military Aviation Museum and is a regular TV and film consultant. He currently edits the German military history magazine, *Iron Cross*.

The Battle of Britain was a critical moment in World War II, a tussle that saw the Royal Air Force and other British services stop the German Luftwaffe gaining air superiority over the UK. Since the end of the war many historians have speculated and debated the possible outcomes if the RAF had been defeated in 1940. This usually centres on the idea that a defeat would have been followed by the Nazi invasion of Britain. Operation Sea Lion, as the German invasion plan was called, could have ultimately led to the complete and irremediable defeat of Britain and her vast empire.

However, while the defeat of the RAF might not necessarily have led to invasion (and if it had, such an invasion attempt might well have failed) it would have certainly set in motion a very different series of events for the remainder of the war.

Why was the Battle of Britain such a critical moment for Britain and Nazi Germany?

By the early summer of 1940 Germany had defeated and occupied the majority of Western Europe, while Britain had suffered the ignominious military disaster of defeat in France, Belgium and Norway. Nevertheless, Britain, its empire and the free Allies still stood between Germany and the complete control and domination it desired. To achieve that goal, Germany needed to eliminate Britain as an effective fighting power. Whether it did that through military invasion, or subjugation by other means, was almost an irrelevance. What mattered, if it was to achieve any such aim, was to gain total air superiority. In other words, to defeat the RAF – and, specifically, RAF Fighter Command.

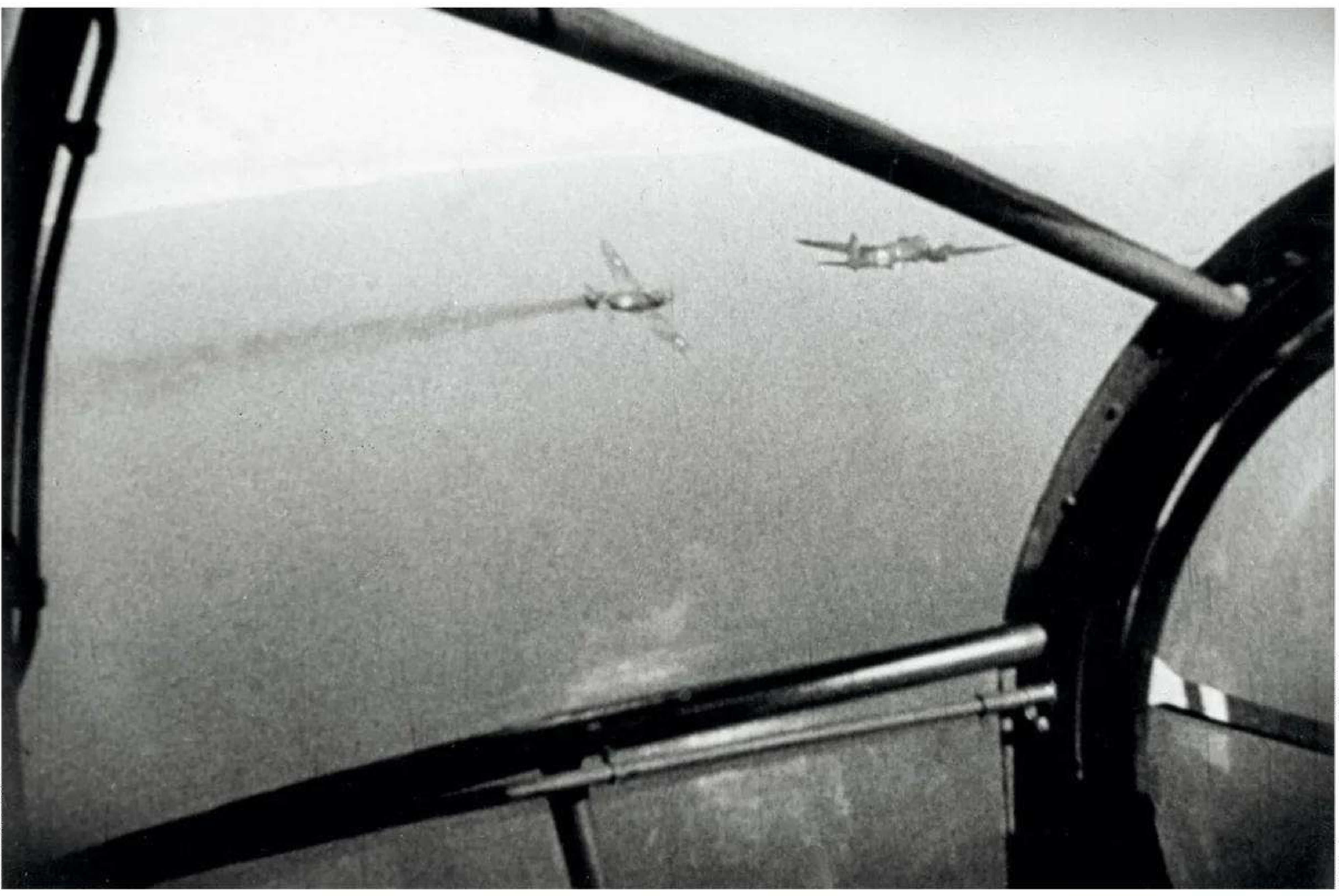
While it might be stretching a point to say that only the RAF stood between invasion and defeat, it was nevertheless a fact that the elimination of the RAF as an effective fighting force was essential if Germany wanted to beat Britain – whether that be by achieving the air superiority necessary for invasion or through bombing Britain into submission through uncontested air attacks.

What was the main reason the RAF was able to stop the Nazis gaining air superiority in 1940?

The most crucial element was the RAF's integrated command and control system. Known colloquially as 'The Dowding System' (after the commander-in-chief of RAF Fighter Command) it incorporated an early warning system through radar and the Observer Corps, allowing commanders to marshal their fighters in a timely fashion and appropriate numbers, and by placing them in the most advantageous tactical position: up-sun, at a higher altitude and aiming to cut off the enemy's approach to target. It did not always work perfectly, but it did allow the RAF's controllers to manage the battle and it thus gave the defenders a great advantage.

What might the Luftwaffe have done differently in the summer of 1940 to defeat the RAF?

Had the Luftwaffe stuck rigidly to its



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RIGHT
Photograph taken from within a German bomber showing a Spitfire hit by enemy fire

Main image sources: © Getty Images

THE PAST

1940

RAF VICTORY

By the autumn of 1940 the Luftwaffe campaign against the RAF was beginning to weaken. On 17 September Hitler suspended Operation Sea Lion – the planned invasion of the UK – and 31 October saw the final daylight raid by the Luftwaffe. Although seriously weakened, the RAF had successfully stopped the Germans gaining air superiority over Britain.

1940-41

THE BLITZ

After it was realised the Luftwaffe had failed to gain air superiority over the UK, the Nazis switched to a focus on nighttime bombing raids. Known simply as the Blitz, for several months German bombers targeted major cities and industrial centres, but also the civilian population. Despite the widespread devastation and loss of life, the British morale remained strong, and the 'Blitz Spirit' of defiant endurance was used in propaganda efforts to maintain support for the war effort.

1942

"REAP THE WHIRLWIND"

Continuing its offensive operations begun during the Battle of Britain, the RAF expanded greatly in the aftermath of 1940 and developed more-effective tactics and technologies to take the fight back to Nazi Germany. In 1942 Arthur 'Bomber' Harris was made Air Marshal of Bomber Command, and began a campaign of strategic area bombing against Germany, stating: "They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind." One of the first major bombing operations was on the night of 30 May, during which over 1,000 RAF aircraft bombed the city of Cologne, destroying approximately 13,000 buildings.

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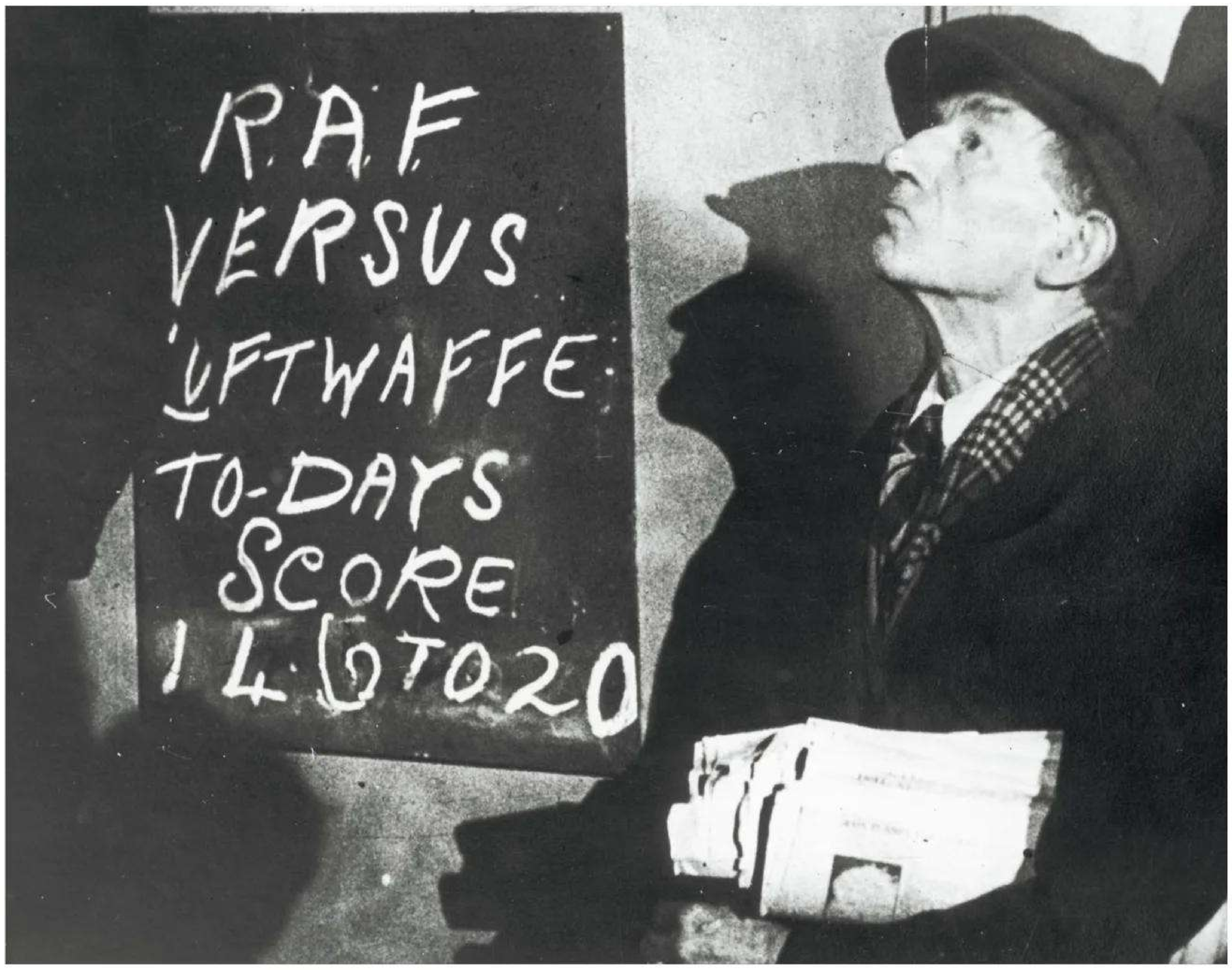


ABOVE A newspaper seller next to a board with the latest 'score' of the Battle of Britain

attacks on RAF airfields (particularly fighter bases), and to infrastructure such as the radar stations, then it would have had a much better chance of bringing Fighter Command to its knees. When it moved away from those targets in late August it did so just at a point when the raids were starting to tell. A relentless continuation and focus on those targets would have finally borne fruit.

Shifting the bombing to cities, industrial targets and ports etc, including night bombing raids, was a grave tactical error by the Nazis because the Luftwaffe really needed to knock out the RAF's defensive capability.

BELOW London's St Paul's Cathedral seen through the smoke after a night of Luftwaffe bombing

If the Luftwaffe had won, would daytime bombing have increased? And what capacity did the Germans have to increase bombing raids?

If the Luftwaffe had been victorious in defeating RAF Fighter Command, then it would have been able to increase daylight bombing operations and range across Britain at will and relatively unhindered, and it would have had capacity to do so. Daylight bombing was far more accurate than bombing by night – as in the Blitz. It would have enabled concentrated targeting to bring about the destruction of infrastructure, warehousing, docks, communications, manufacturing, remaining military targets, food supplies and more. In this manner, Germany might have theoretically secured the defeat of Britain and its neutralisation as a fighting power without any need for a risky cross-Channel invasion.

What impact might an increase in bombing have had on Britain's war effort and morale?

An increase in bombing (in the event of RAF Fighter Command defeat) might have been catastrophic for Britain's continuation with the war if its ability to manufacture or import was sufficiently depleted. However, in such an eventuality as the defeat of the RAF, there would have been no purpose in the Luftwaffe 'terror bombing' the civilian population. The effort would have been militarily and tactically wasted, although public morale

may have begun to buckle if it saw or realised that its erstwhile saviours, the RAF, had already been defeated.

That said, the Ministry of Information's Home Security Unit monitored morale in the Blitz, and while the reaction of civilians was variable it was over-arched by grumbles and grievances rather than any doom-laden crumbling of morale. One of the leaders of the organisation monitoring morale wrote: "The British are pragmatic and with a stability of temperament, albeit with a slightly gloomy tinge."

He went on to say that they tended towards self-righteous indignation when things went wrong and had a masochistic delight in, "knowing the worst." He also judged that to the British, "the possibility of defeat is neither imagined, nor imaginable." This, of course, was when Dunkirk had been perceived as 'victorious', the Battle of Britain had been won and the population buoyed-up by the rhetoric of Winston Churchill. All of that may have changed if the British population was truly staring defeat in the face.

ABOVE-TOP
A British soldier guarding a German Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighter plane, which had been intercepted over the English Channel and shot down

ABOVE-MIDDLE
Hawker Hurricanes in formation during 1940

ABOVE
Messerschmitt Bf110 bombers in formation flight

If the RAF had been defeated, was a German invasion or a British surrender more likely?

Even with air superiority wrested from the RAF, it was not a given that invasion would have followed because such an operation was fraught with danger and difficulty – even with Fighter Command out of the way. Part of the problem for Germany was the logistical issue of getting an invasion force across the Channel because it simply did not have either the right vessels or sufficient numbers of them.

Additionally, the Luftwaffe had lost a huge percentage of its Ju 52 transport fleet in Holland and many key naval vessels in Norway, and with the Royal Navy still immensely powerful its Home Fleet would have impeded invasion attempts. However, the Royal Navy's ships would have been very vulnerable to Luftwaffe attack (particularly from the Ju 87 Stuka) without fighter cover from the RAF. Also, and again without fighter cover, Bomber Command would have intervened.

The occupying force would also need to be fed and supplied, and supply lines may have been challenging.

Was it possible the RAF could have been rebuilt to defend Britain?

Had RAF Fighter Command been defeated, and no invasion or occupation of Britain had subsequently occurred, then it might theoretically have been possible to rebuild the fighter force. However, this would have been contingent upon the ability to continue aircraft production in undamaged factories (there was never a shortage of aircraft, only of pilots) or potentially the import of suitable American fighters – although this would all have taken time.

The rebuilding of RAF capability within Britain would also have been reliant upon the supply of raw materials, that the Luftwaffe did not then focus on the destruction of aircraft factories, and that enough pilots could be trained and made operational in good time.

THE POSSIBILITY

1940

LUFTWAFFE SUPERIORITY

With RAF Fighter Command crippled or destroyed, the Luftwaffe would have reigned supreme in British airspace. With no fighter aircraft to pose any threat, Luftwaffe bombers could launch a greater number of bombing raids on Britain's industrial centres and major cities. The benefit of bombing during the daytime would have made these raids far more accurate and therefore devastating for Britain's war industry.

1941

BLITZ SPIRIT BROKEN

In a speech to Parliament after the evacuation of Dunkirk, Winston Churchill was able to rally the morale of the public by drawing great confidence from the RAF's successes against the Luftwaffe. The defeat of the RAF during the summer of 1940 would therefore have come as a shock to many, and certainly a dark moment during a war that so far had seen few if any significant victories for the Allies. The unrestricted bombing of British factories and cities would have had a further impact on public morale, as well as Britain's war industry. Though an invasion of the mainland UK may still not have taken place, Britain's factories and port towns would have been heavily damaged during the bombings, greatly reducing Britain's ability to continue the war.

All images: © Getty Images

What if...

MUSSOLINI HAD NOT INVADED GREECE?

If Mussolini had kept his ego in check, would it have strengthened the Axis powers?

INTERVIEW WITH

© S Gonsalves

Simon Gonsalves

Simon is a public affairs officer with the Royal Canadian Navy, with a Masters in International Public Policy from the Balsillie School of International Affairs. He is the author of the academic paper 'The Italian Army in the Second World War A Historiographical Analysis'.

Following his alliance with Germany in 1936 Mussolini, having been in power far longer than his German counterpart, was mistaken in thinking that it was a partnership of equals. In Il Duce's eyes he was a seasoned politician, with sound judgement that had saved his people and his country; almost the senior statesman of the two. Hitler begged to differ, kept Mussolini in the dark about his plans, and regarded him as something of a loose cannon. Italy's invasion of Greece, with no consultation with his ally, was to prove the point. But if Mussolini had listened to advice, had consulted with Hitler, and taken alternative action, how different would that have been for the success of the Axis powers and the impact on the war?

What were the arguments for Mussolini not to invade Greece and who was making them?

The most consistent and strongly-voiced opposition to Mussolini's Balkan ambitions was circles of power from within the Third Reich – Italy's closest and most strategically important ally. German leadership urged the Italian dictator to avoid any Balkan complications, and concentrate its military efforts on Britain – the most pressing wartime threat to the Axis alliance in 1940. German diplomatic pressure, as well as the start of the Italian invasion of Egypt, had hampered Italian ambitions in both Greece and Yugoslavia. German disapproval was a major annoyance to Mussolini, who thought the war would soon be won, as it frustrated Italy's expansionist, opportunistic territorial claims. Mussolini's ill-fated statement, "I only need a few thousand dead so that I can sit at the peace conference as a man who has fought," epitomises this unscrupulous mentality.

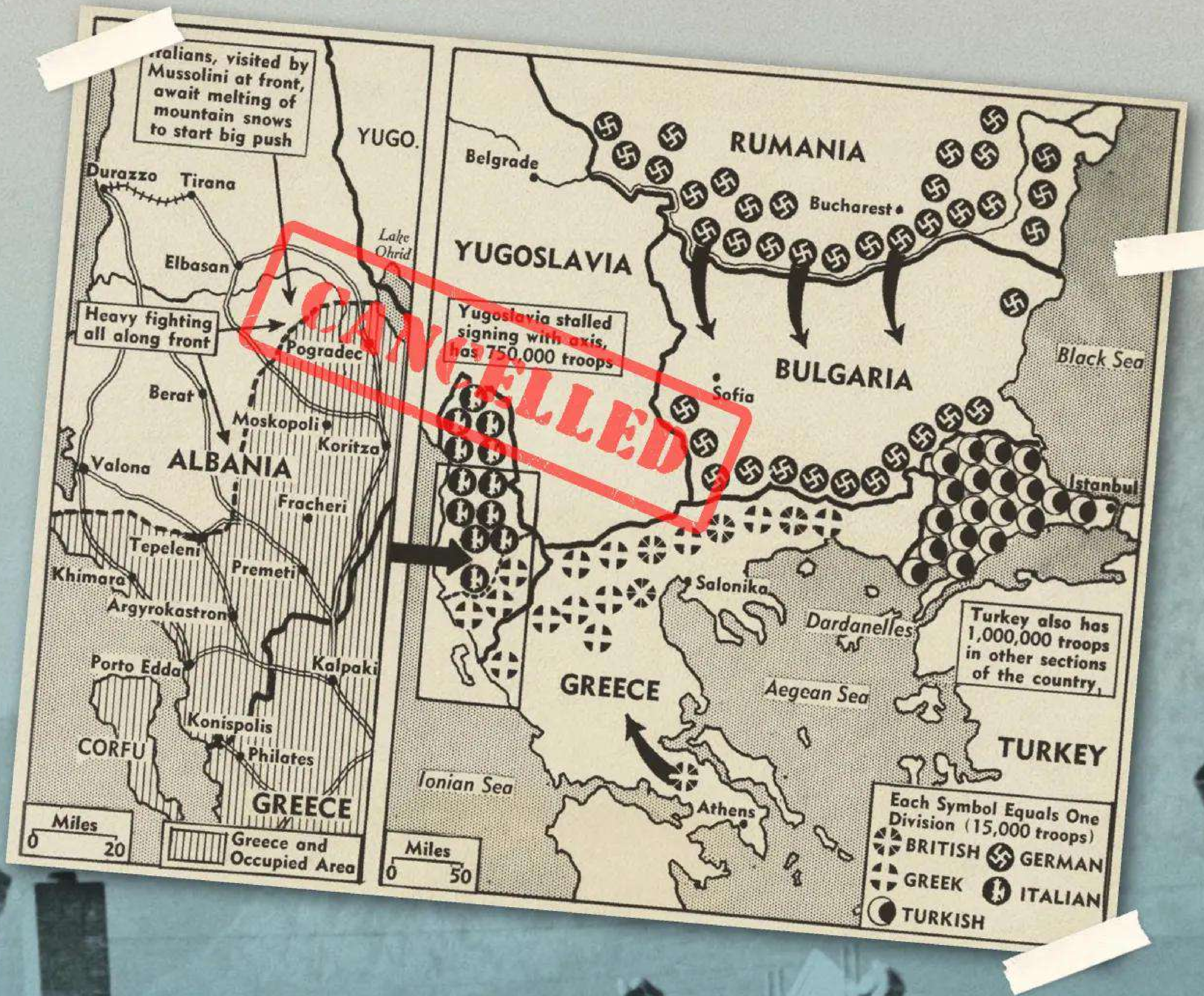
However, on 7 October 1940, German troops entered Romania to guard vital oil fields and prepare for Operation Barbarossa. Mussolini, who had not been informed beforehand, regarded this deployment as an encroachment on Italy's Balkan sphere of influence as well as a national humiliation. Internal resistance was minimal, as both the heads of the Italian Monarchy and Armed Forces did oppose the invasion.

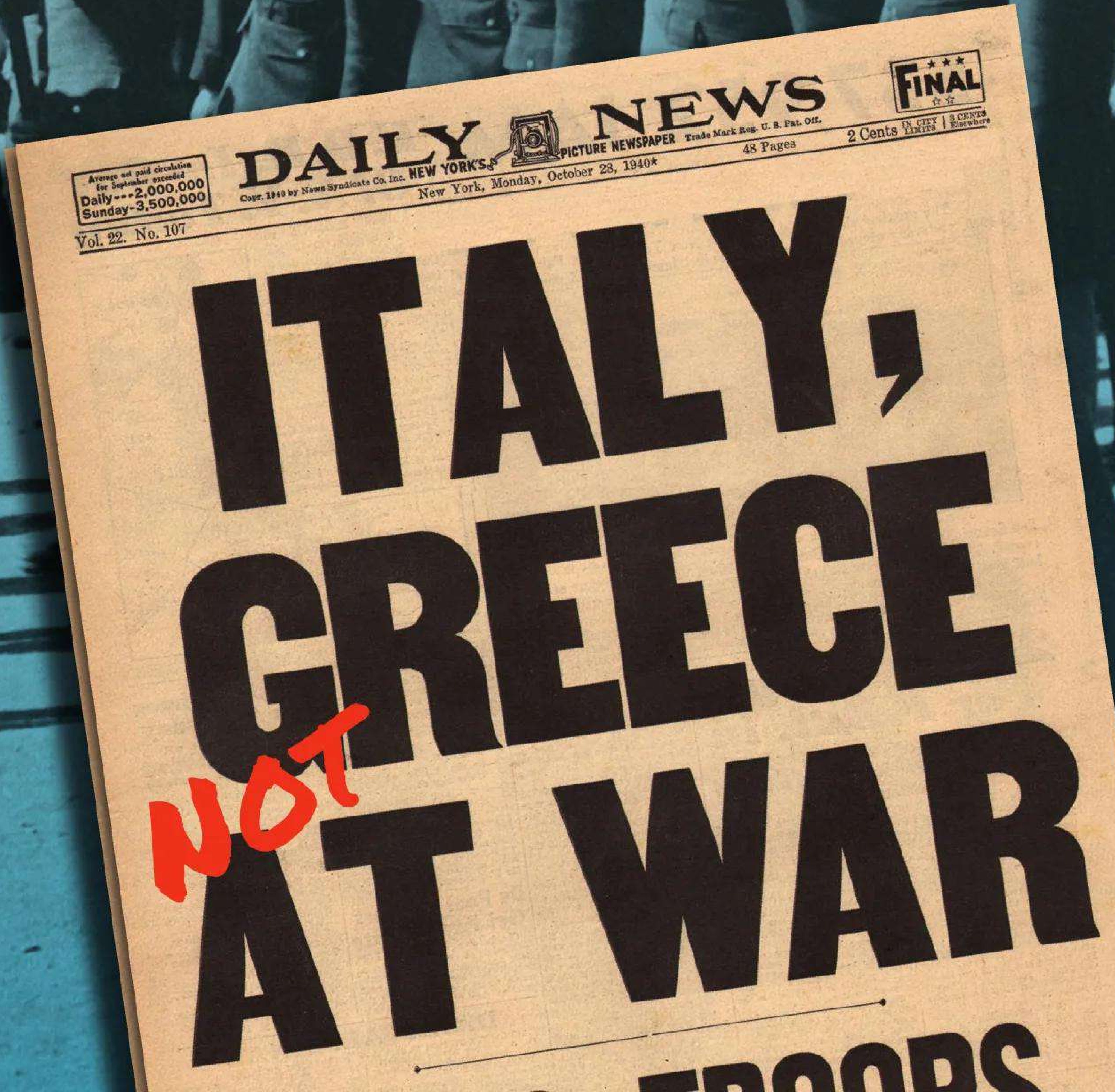
How might his reputation have been boosted by not invading?

One of the greater ironies of World War II is that by attempting to assert equality in the Rome-Berlin axis, all Mussolini managed to do was drastically reduce Italy's reputational standing with Germany. In the aftermath of the Third Reich's Balkan intervention, as well as the disasters in North Africa, the country was reduced to little more than a German client state with negligible influence. The Führer snidely commented that the catastrophe had the "healthy effect of once more compressing Italian claims to within the natural boundaries of Italian competency".

Main image source: © Alamy, Getty Images

RIGHT
Mussolini's ego would cause problems for Germany's plans


Italians, visited by Mussolini at front, await melting of mountain snows to start big push
YUGO.
Durazzo
Tirana
Elbasan
Lake Ohrid
Heavy fighting all along front
Pogradec
Berat
Moskopoli
Koritza
Valona
ALBANIA
Fracheri
Tepeleni
Premeti
Khimara
Argyrokastron
Porto Edda
Kalpaki
Konispolis
CORFU
Philates
GREECE
Miles 0 20
Greece and Occupied Area
CANCELLED
Belgrade
RUMANIA
Bucharest
YUGOSLAVIA
Yugoslavia stalled signing with axis, has 750,000 troops
BULGARIA
Sofia
Black Sea
Istanbul
Salonika
Dardanelles
Turkey also has 1,000,000 troops in other sections of the country.
GREECE
Aegean Sea
TURKEY
Ionian Sea
Athens
Miles 0 50
Each Symbol Equals One Division (15,000 troops)
BRITISH
GERMAN
GREEK
ITALIAN
TURKISH



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Vol. 22. No. 107

ITALY, GREECE NOT AT WAR

TROOPS

THE PAST

28 OCTOBER 1940

IMPETUOUS INVASION

Having already occupied Albania, Mussolini takes the independent and surprising decision to invade Greece. Hitler, who had been unaware of the move, had considered it better policy for Italy to focus on North Africa and a push against the Allies towards Egypt. Even many of Mussolini's own staff were either unaware of, or against, the plan. Seen by many as nothing more than a propaganda exercise to try and bolster his own standing in the eyes of Italians, the plan is an attempt by Mussolini to try and prove that he can be as good a strategist as his German allies.

NOV 1940 – APRIL 1941

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

Despite the fact that millions of Italian lire had been sent to bribe the politicians and military leaders in Greece not to oppose the invasion, the money, if it ever reached its destination, made no difference. The Italian forces were underprepared and poorly led, and they were fighting in hostile and unfamiliar mountainous terrain. Within a week the Italians were facing fierce defence from the Greek army, which had British air support from the RAF. Driven back into southern Albania after the Battle of Pindus, by January 1941 the Greek forces had captured the strategically important Klisura Pass. It was an important Allied victory, but the situation turned into something of a stalemate until the Germans decided to take the initiative.

APRIL 1941

THE NAZIS STEP IN

Aware that a humiliating defeat of his ally Mussolini might reflect badly on the Axis and on him, Hitler reluctantly freed up forces that he would have preferably used against the USSR, in order to bolster the assault on Greece. Operation Marita was launched while the majority of the Greek forces were on the border with Albania. Hitler opened a second front by moving through Bulgaria. Supported by a small force of British, Australian and New Zealand troops, the Greek army found itself overwhelmed. By 27 April the Nazis were in Athens. A month later, following an airborne assault, they captured the island of Crete.

ABOVE British troop numbers could have been reinforced successfully in North Africa

One of the most important consequences of Italian détente with Greece would be significantly improved Italo-German relations. Without the wasteful diversion of limited military resources and manpower to the ill-fated Greek campaign, fascist Italy could have contributed substantially more to vital Axis objectives. In this timeline, Mussolini could have enhanced Italy's strategic coordination with Nazi Germany by creating a more unified and cohesive Axis front, giving him greater weight in a relationship unfettered by earlier defeats. While Mussolini's aspirations to be seen as a German equal were thoroughly delusional, a stronger military reputation would have decidedly improved Italy's diplomatic weight to shape global affairs.

In terms of internal affairs, the Greek campaign's difficulties and setbacks contributed to growing domestic discontent and criticism of Mussolini's leadership. By avoiding the invasion of Greece, Mussolini – whose political position rested on his strongman persona – could have maintained greater domestic stability farther into the conflict, reducing later internal challenges caused by reputational loss by the various military setbacks, with Greece being just the first.

What might he have done instead?

Through its declaration of war, Italy committed itself to a global conflict that, by its own admission, it would not be prepared to wage until at least 1943 – Italy's military stockpiles were substantially depleted due to its extensive involvement in the Spanish Civil War. However, while Italy's capabilities were undeniably limited, there are two obvious alternatives to where divisions destined for Greece could have deployed instead. Yugoslavia might have been another realistic target, which was under pressure to join the Axis from the commencement of hostilities. After the Yugoslavian coup, Italian forces would likely have joined the German invasion of the country.

Italy's military contribution to the Eastern Front was limited. However, non-involvement in Greece could have led to more substantial support for Operation Barbarossa. This could have influenced the dynamics of the initial push as well as the broader conflict with the Soviet Union. Even though the vast scale and mechanised nature of the theatre would have diluted any augmented Italian contribution, the addition of several relatively elite Italian divisions, which were destined to be ground down in Greece, would have increased the power of the 1941 and 1942 summer offensives into the USSR.

Another potentiality would be the large-scale reallocation of Italian offensive potential to North Africa – the second of Italy's primary theatres of operation. However, the cautious approach taken by area commanders, alongside parochially myopic objectives, and poor tactical/operational doctrines, limited the offensive potential of any fortified Italian push into Egypt. Furthermore, the logistical constraints intrinsic in desert warfare, worsened by the contested sea-borne supply lines from Italy to Libya, would have limited this planned surge in Italian military resources. Lastly, during Operation Compass, the vastly outnumbered British suffered only 634 deaths on the attack, in exchange for taking 133,298 prisoners, capturing 420 tanks, and taking approximately 845 large guns. It's entirely possible that the most important consequence of an Italian focus on Libya would be in an even higher loss of critical men and material.

What impact would it have had on Hitler and his plans, and what might he have done differently?

Though Barbarossa's delay from mid-May to late June is often attributed to

Germany's offensive into the Balkans – largely undertaken as a response to Italian failure against Greece – the attack against the Soviet Union was pushed back predominantly due to poor weather conditions caused by an exceptionally late and wet spring. Whether Germany's Balkan campaign jeopardised Barbarossa's chances of success is historically debated. However, most contemporary historians agree that any delay made a marginal difference to the eventual outcome.

Without pressure to reinforce Greece from combined Axis assault in spring 1941, British forces in North Africa no longer have any reason to halt their incredibly successful advance due to a short-notice redeployment. As a result, it's likely – without German combat power – that the entirety of Libya is controlled by the British Empire by early 1941. As the Italian collapse would have been both complete and swift, German expeditionary forces would be hard-pressed to deploy across the Mediterranean in sufficient strength to prevent this.

Correspondingly, with no North African or Balkan distractions, additional German supplies, logistical resources, and combat units would be available for Eastern Front deployment. This might have been marginal, considering the scope of Barbarossa, but several additional divisions of strength could have made an appreciable difference.

How would things have played out differently across the Mediterranean/ Aegean North African theatres of war? How would it have affected the strategic plans of how the Allies conducted the war?

Italy's non-involvement would have led to fewer air, sea, and ground Allied forces being sent, tied down, and lost in Greece due to the overwhelming German superiority in men and material. While the Greek government, as an aggregate, was Western-leaning before the Italian invasion, the pressure to remain neutral was powerful because of Axis continental dominance. If the fascist regime made sincere and concerted efforts to build better relations with the Greek government, Metaxas, the Greek dictator, would be able to resist any attempts to align with London.

However, the 1940-41 Italian-Greek war led to increasing British military involvement in the country, and the subsequent German invasion prompted the diversion of significant numbers of British and Commonwealth forces stationed in the Mediterranean theatre. However, the Greek campaign ended in a complete German victory – the British did not have the necessary military resources in the region to permit them to carry out simultaneous large-scale operations in both North Africa and the Balkans. In their failed attempt to save Greece from the Axis, the British were forced into another two years of hard fighting in North Africa, as they were unable to complete the conquest of Italian-held Libya or stop Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps counteroffensive.

Without the necessity to commit limited and hard to replace units in the defence of Greece, British and Commonwealth forces would have had significant forces available to be redeployed in North Africa. An attack into Vichy-held territories would have been likely, considering British invasions of non-Free French African possessions, which potentially would have been followed by an amphibious assault of Sicily. However, it's highly probable that under the shadow of rising Japanese militarism, Britain would redeploy many high-readiness divisions – and the experienced officers who commanded them – to the Far East after victory in North Africa. Correspondingly, when the British territories in Asia-Pacific came under Japanese assault in early 1942, they'd face much stronger defensive forces. While unlikely to prevent isolated holdings, such as Hong Kong, from falling to Japanese aggression, this shift might have been sufficient to prevent the collapse and surrender of British Malaya/ Singapore, preventing the resulting Australian panic and resentment, and allow the British to resist Japanese advances elsewhere more effectively.

ABOVE
The German invasion of Greece succeeded where Mussolini had failed

THE POSSIBILITY

1940

A DIFFERENT DIRECTION

Mussolini could have seen Greece more as a diplomatic neighbour rather than some sort of prize that could be won to bolster his own misplaced ambitions. By taking a non-aggressive stance, and seeing the bigger picture, not invading Greece could have guaranteed its neutrality in the region, allowing him, and Hitler, to focus attention on another direction. In that instance, any intervention by British and Commonwealth forces to support the Hellenic army would have been unnecessary, allowing them to be deployed elsewhere. As a result, the execution of the war by both the Allies and the Axis powers may have looked very different indeed.

1940-43

DIGGING IN

With no British and Commonwealth troops committed in Greece, the strength of the force against Italy in Libya could have been much more substantial. By driving Italian forces out of Libya and establishing overall control of the region, the threat to supply lines via Malta would have been much reduced, while at the same time the ability to exploit those supply lines in the southern Mediterranean would improve. Time and resources would also be more plentiful in the plans to resist the counteroffensive of Rommel's Afrika Korps when it came.

1941-45

HEADING EAST

The war against Japan could have seen a significant boost in troop numbers by British and Commonwealth forces not getting embroiled in Greece and the Balkans. British colonies and overseas territories, and the citizens who lived there, may have been better protected by such an increase in men and equipment. The ability by the British and Commonwealth troops to resist Japanese offensives much more effectively in 1942 would no doubt have led to the Japanese Empire having to redirect resources to counteract the Allied strength. In so doing, it may have given the USA more leverage in the war in the Pacific to make greater and faster advances against Japan and even bring the war to an end sooner.

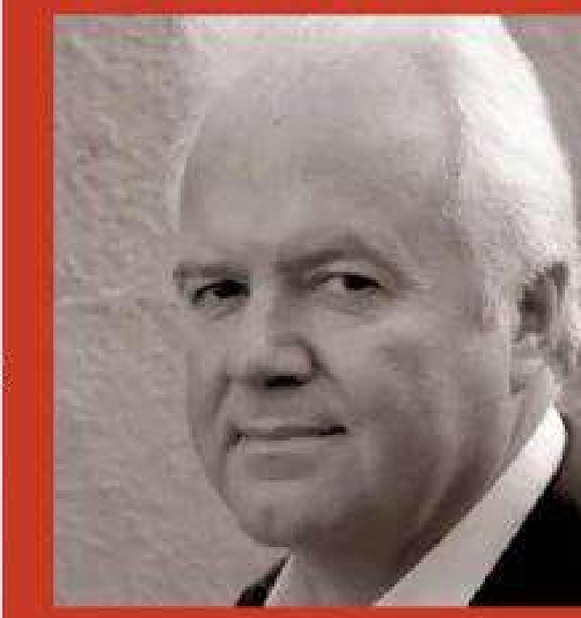
All images: Alamy, Getty Images

What if...

GERMANY HAD CAPTURED MALTA?

Capture by the Nazis of this small yet strategically significant island could have changed the course of the entire war

INTERVIEW WITH



© T Downing

Taylor Downing

Taylor is a historian, writer, and television producer. His last book *1942: Britain at the Brink* (Abacus paperback) explores the military disasters of 1942 and how they generated a political crisis for Churchill and his government. His new book, *The Army that Never Was: D-Day and the Great Deception* (Icon Books) tells the gripping, inside story of how the Allies used many different deception techniques to fool the Germans as to when and where the invasion of Northern Europe would come, including the invention of an entirely phoney Army group. **www.taylordowning.com**

For the Allied forces to fight an effective campaign in North Africa, the British colony of Malta was crucial. Supplies could be protected and maintained for British troops in Egypt, while at the same time Allied forces based on the island could disrupt the supply routes of the Axis forces to Libya. Whichever side controlled Malta held a trump card in the North African campaign. The Maltese people were to show immense courage against an unwavering German onslaught from the air. But if that Maltese fortitude, and the determination of British forces, had been broken, how differently might the war in North Africa have looked?

What would an Axis invasion of Malta (instead of Crete) in 1941 have meant for Rommel in North Africa?
Malta came to be of central strategic significance in the war in North Africa and in the Battle for the Mediterranean. Its geographic location, 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Sicily and midway between Europe and North Africa, enabled it to attack enemy shipping and air activity in the central Mediterranean. The British held the island, which included a major deep water naval base along with three important airfields. After Italy had declared war on Britain and France, on the eve of France's fall in June 1940, Mussolini ordered his army in Italian Libya to invade the British in Egypt. They moved forward cautiously but were thrown back 805 kilometres (500 miles) by General Richard O'Connor's Western Desert Force. It was Britain's first and pretty much only land victory in this part of the war, with 125,000 Italian soldiers, 400 tanks and 845 guns captured. Hitler sent his most daring general, Erwin Rommel, to help the Italians. The Afrika Korps or the Panzerarmee Afrika was born. It was reliant upon supplies of fuel, food and ammunition sent by ship from Italy. Rommel immediately realised the importance of Malta and argued the island should be invaded. He opposed the invasion of Crete in May 1941 and wrote: "Without Malta, the Axis will end up losing control of North Africa". Had Malta been invaded in 1941, Rommel's task in North Africa would have been very different.

How would an invasion of Malta have boosted Axis supply lines and changed the war in North Africa?
Throughout 1941, the Axis troops in North Africa, eventually six Italian and three German divisions, two of which were Panzer units, were reliant upon supplies shipped across the Mediterranean. When Malta was powerful, its naval assets, Force K, along with torpedo bombers flying out of its airfields could freely attack Axis supply convoys. In the summer months of 1941, they sank 300,000 tons of Axis shipping. In November 1941, 80 per cent of the ships carrying supplies to troops in North Africa were sunk. Taking advantage of this, Operation Crusader led to a major land defeat for Axis forces in North Africa. Allied armies succeeded in relieving Tobruk and recapturing much of Cyrenaica. Had Hitler and the OKW followed Rommel's advice earlier in that year and invaded Malta, then the

© Alamy

RIGHT Maltese citizens, young and old, struggled for survival

THE PAST

1940-41

EYES ON THE PRIZE

From late 1940, Malta had been under almost constant attack by the Luftwaffe, following the Italian navy suffering several defeats. The bombardment seriously restricted the ability of the British forces to disrupt the supply lines of the Axis forces. The Nazi command had made it very clear that they wanted the island to be taken, but in 1941 an attempted invasion was thwarted when Italian torpedo boats were spotted. After a temporary respite when German aircraft were redeployed to Russia, by late 1941 the Luftwaffe were back and determined to 'neutralise' the island in preparation for a German invasion.

1942

TO HELL AND BACK

The bombing campaign of Malta and its people was as relentless as it was deadly. Following the orders of Hitler that the island should be 'neutralised', hundreds of air raids between January and July 1942 tried to batter the islanders into submission. It was the longest and most sustained bombing attack of WWII – 154 days and nights and a total of 6,700 tons of bombs. While hell rained down from the skies, with supply routes of food and medicine strangled by the Germans, the Maltese suffered incredible hunger and disease and thousands of buildings were destroyed.

1942-43

SPIRIT OF STEEL

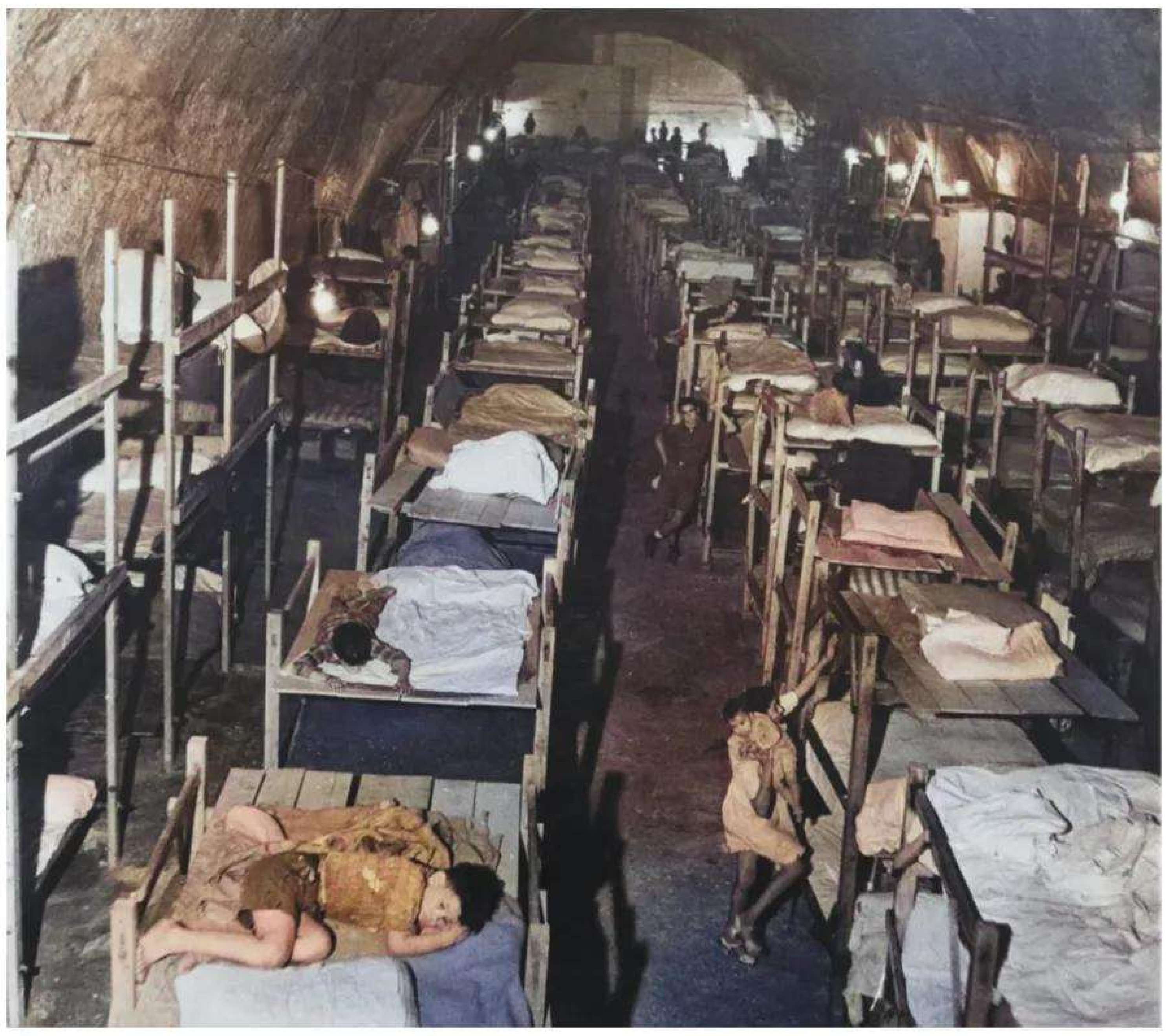
In recognition of their courage, bravery, and dogged resilience in the face of unspeakable terror and almost impossible living conditions, on 15 April 1942 King George VI awarded the Maltese people the George Cross, second only to the VC. By May 1942 the Germans mistakenly thought the island had been 'neutralised' and deployed aircraft elsewhere. Malta was immediately reinforced with Spitfires and other forces. Supplies started to slowly return, but at a heavy price. In August 1942, a convoy known as Operation Pedestal successfully reached Malta with thousands of tons of supplies. But of the original 14 merchant ships only five arrived safely. Malta would now be a key element in amphibious landings in North Africa in 1942, and Sicily and mainland Italy in 1943. Courage and the spirit of the Maltese people had prevailed.

major thorn in the side of their fighting forces in North Africa would have been removed. With supplies flooding in, Rommel and his Italian allies would not have been as short of fuel and ammunition as they were.

The see-saw war in North Africa was always closely balanced. But better supplied, the Axis would without doubt have had the upper hand. An advance right across Egypt would not have stopped at El Alamein in July 1942. It's also likely that a better supplied Panzerarmee Afrika would have been able to advance on Alexandria, capture Cairo and take control of the Suez Canal. Churchill wrote in May 1942 to General Claude Auchinleck, head of Middle East Command, that the loss of Malta would be "fatal in the long run to the defence of the Nile valley".

What extra strain would there be on Allied warships and the RAF, and would tactics need to change?

At the end of 1941, Admiral Dönitz was forced to divert up to half of his U-boat force from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. This had an immediate effect with the sinking of HMS Ark Royal and the battleship HMS Barham. Simultaneously, a heavily reinforced Fliegerkorps (air corps) arrived in Sicily and began to pound Malta continuously from the air. On some days there were up to 16 separate air raids in a day. Malta had the dubious distinction of being the most bombed place on Earth, enduring 12,000 bombing sorties in March and April 1942. The Royal Navy was forced to withdraw from Malta and the RAF frequently had only a handful of planes it could get airborne. Had Malta been invaded in 1941, this immense force directed against the island of Malta could have instead been used in North Africa. And although it became ineffective as a military base in the spring of 1942, Malta was still there in British hands. Had it not been, Britain's Mediterranean fleets would have had to operate out of Gibraltar and Alexandria. They would have struggled to have any influence over the central Mediterranean. And likewise, the RAF would have been forced to concentrate on the Desert Air Force operating out of its bases in North Africa and would only have been able to hit a few of the supply convoys heading to North Africa. With Malta occupied, the Axis would have dominated the central Mediterranean and North Africa.



ABOVE
Shelters in the rock caves were the only refuge from the onslaught available to the Maltese

> "Better supplied, the Axis would without doubt have had the upper hand"

Would the German invasion of Russia have been impacted by the success?

The German invasion of the Soviet Union would have gone ahead anyway. It was always Hitler's intention to defeat Bolshevism and smash the Slavic races. The assault upon Crete following the Nazi occupation of Greece probably delayed Operation Barbarossa by a matter of days or weeks. Had Hitler assaulted Malta instead of Crete, the battle for the smaller island would almost certainly have been shorter and Barbarossa might have started a few days earlier. This would have given the German army a few extra days of combat before winter set in. In the long run this probably would have not made a lot of difference to the 1941 campaign in the Soviet Union.

TOP
The German bombardment showed how valued the island was strategically

ABOVE
From Malta, British subs could disrupt the Axis supply lines

How would a successful invasion of Malta possibly have changed Hitler's overall ambitions?

If Rommel had been able to use the superior capability he would have had if supplies had been able to get through to him, then he would almost certainly have been able to occupy Egypt. After throwing out the British, Australian, Indian, New Zealand and South African forces from its major Middle Eastern base, Rommel would have had no hesitation in advancing across Sinai into British administered Palestine, the location of the Jewish National Homeland that had been promised to the Zionists in World War I.

By 1942 there were approximately half a million Jews living in Palestine. The SS would have taken control of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and the rest of Jewish Palestine. The Jews living there would have been rounded up and the appalling horror of the Holocaust would have extended into an even greater tragedy.

Could such potential Nazi dominance of the Mediterranean impact the outcome of the war?

Had the Nazis invaded Malta in the spring of 1941 as Rommel had proposed, then many elements of the war could have unfolded very differently. Having occupied Egypt and Palestine, as discussed, Rommel would almost certainly have gone on to assault Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, all territories that had been brought under Allied control in the early 1940s. With Iraqi oilfields opened up to the German military machine, the fuel crisis that plagued the Nazi war effort through the latter stages of the war would have been averted. But would Hitler have stopped there? Almost certainly not. He probably would have driven north from Iraq and into the Caucasus. From there Axis troops might have been able to strike into southern Russia and perhaps lift the siege of Stalingrad on the Volga. With reinforcements pouring in through the Caucasus it is not difficult to believe that his conquest of the Soviet Union would have been a success.

Alternatively, Axis troops might have driven on from the Middle East across Persia, taking control of its oilfields and eastwards into India. Here Nazi troops might have met up with Japanese troops advancing west from Burma, providing an Axis encirclement of the Soviet Union with easy access to a vast array of global resources. It's difficult to see that Hitler would ever have had enough men and materiel to achieve this but it was a possibility that seriously worried war planners in London and Washington in the summer of 1942. As Churchill had observed prophetically, the loss of Malta "would be a disaster of the first magnitude to the British Empire". He was absolutely right. That's why Malta deserved the unique award of the George Cross to the island and islanders at its blackest hour in April 1942. It was only a small island, but it made a big strategic contribution in defending the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

THE POSSIBILITY

1942-43

HORROR IN THE HOMELAND

With Malta and the Axis supply routes secured, the momentum of Rommel's advance and success across North Africa would result in thousands more Allied deaths, casualties, and prisoners of war. Engulfing Egypt and moving into Palestine, the Nazi forces would be able to repeat the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust. At the very least enslaved into hard labour, at worst senselessly butchered for their faith, thousands would perish in concentration camps built on the very site of their spiritual home; a place where they thought they had found sanctuary from prejudice and evil.

1942-45

OILING THE WAR MACHINE

Pushing deep into the heart of the Middle East, Axis forces would claim the oil-rich territories as lucrative spoils of war and a welcome addition to much-needed resources. Access to, and control of, vast amounts of oil to fuel the Nazi war machine would add yet more strength to the ever-expanding vice of steel that was encircling the Mediterranean, gripping it more tightly. The German and Italian resources may well have been stretched to their limits, but their supply lines for fuel would be shortened, and Allied forces would be hard pushed to win back such a vast area, and the Axis would have the upper hand.

1942-45

A SOUTHERN FRONT

Pushing north from Palestine and Lebanon would offer Hitler a different opportunity to execute his plan against Soviet Russia and its people. Opening up a front in the South, while maintaining pressure in the East, may well have been enough to clinch the victory against the Soviets he craved, and in which so many lives on both sides had already been lost. The Nazis could continue to strengthen their position through a pincer movement to engulf the southern Soviet territories – and the precious resources they held – across to the rest of Nazi-occupied Europe, and an almost complete encirclement of the Mediterranean.

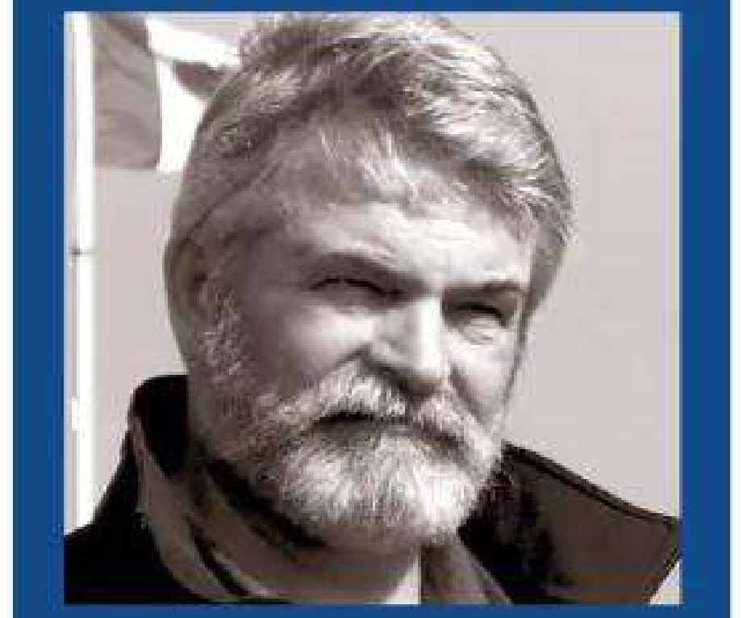
All images: © Alamy

What if...

THE ALLIES HAD LOST THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC?

Professor Marc Milner has spent over 35 years studying the Atlantic war. We ask him what might have happened had Germany emerged victorious

INTERVIEW WITH



Marc Milner

Marc Milner is Professor of History and Director of the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. He has published extensively on the Battle of the Atlantic and the history of the Royal Canadian Navy. A contributor to the official histories of both the RCN and the RCAF in World War II, Milner's book, *Battle Of The Atlantic*, won the CP Stacey Prize for the best book on military history in Canada in 2004. His recent work has been on the Normandy campaign, including *Stopping The Panzers: The Untold Story Of D-Day*, which won the US Commission on Military History's 'James Collins Book Prize' for 2014-15.

What if the Allies had lost the Battle of the Atlantic?

Britain would not have been able to carry on its war effort for very long. In 1939, Britain was dependent for at least half of its food imported from overseas, so it would have been in a very serious situation in this regard. Also, Britain's economy in 1939-40 is pretty much export-based, so to survive economically it needed to import raw material and export finished goods. It would have been virtually impossible for Britain to survive if it had not been able to use the sea. The Germans reached the French coast in the summer, so Britain would have that year's harvest.

If the Germans had put the squeeze on Britain in the winter of 1940-41, which they tried to do, I think it would have been just a matter of weeks, perhaps months, before the British government would have had to make a decision about accommodating German requests. I don't see a great surge of Germans coming across the English Channel, at least not initially, because the Germans could not have launched an invasion at the same time they were trying to do an effective blockade of Britain. The big question for the British would have been, apart from accommodating Hitler's wishes and succumbing to the pressure, the extent to which it would have been an occupied country. That would certainly have been an interesting situation.

How would it have been possible for the Germans to have won the war in the Atlantic?

Most people tell me that if the Germans had had 300 U-boats in 1939 they would have won the Battle of the Atlantic. My response is always that if the Germans had had 300 U-boats, the Brits would have had 250 destroyers, sloops and frigates. You can't change one variable and expect the others to remain unchanged. The Brits built for the threat – Germany's surface fleet. The rest could be – and was – improvised in a time of crisis. Simply put: the Germans could never have won the Battle of the Atlantic, but Britain could have lost it.

The greatest threat to imports in 1940-41 was the bombing and closure of key British ports and that's a Luftwaffe responsibility, nothing to do with the Kriegsmarine. Many historians make a facile and erroneous link between import decline and sinkings at sea in this period, but it's just not that simple. The Germans did not have the power in 1940-41 to inflict a knockout blow at sea. 'Death by a thousand cuts' was a more plausible scenario, but even that could not be done fast enough to ensure the death of the victim. The Germans are really the engine of the Atlantic War because if the Germans don't do anything, the Allies win. It is just that simple.

So if Germany were to have won the war in the Atlantic, it would have been in the winter of 1941 when Britain was standing alone in Europe?

Yes. Someone said that Britain had 500 million people around the world backing it up, but it really is the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dyke in the winter of 1941. That's the only moment when the Germans have a clear, measurable, obtainable objective in the Atlantic War – and that is to blockade Britain and force it to surrender. But the problem for the Germans is that they don't have the resources to do it. One of the biggest impacts on British imports in the winter of 1940-41 is the Blitz. Most people don't associate that with the Battle of the Atlantic, but the bombing and closure of

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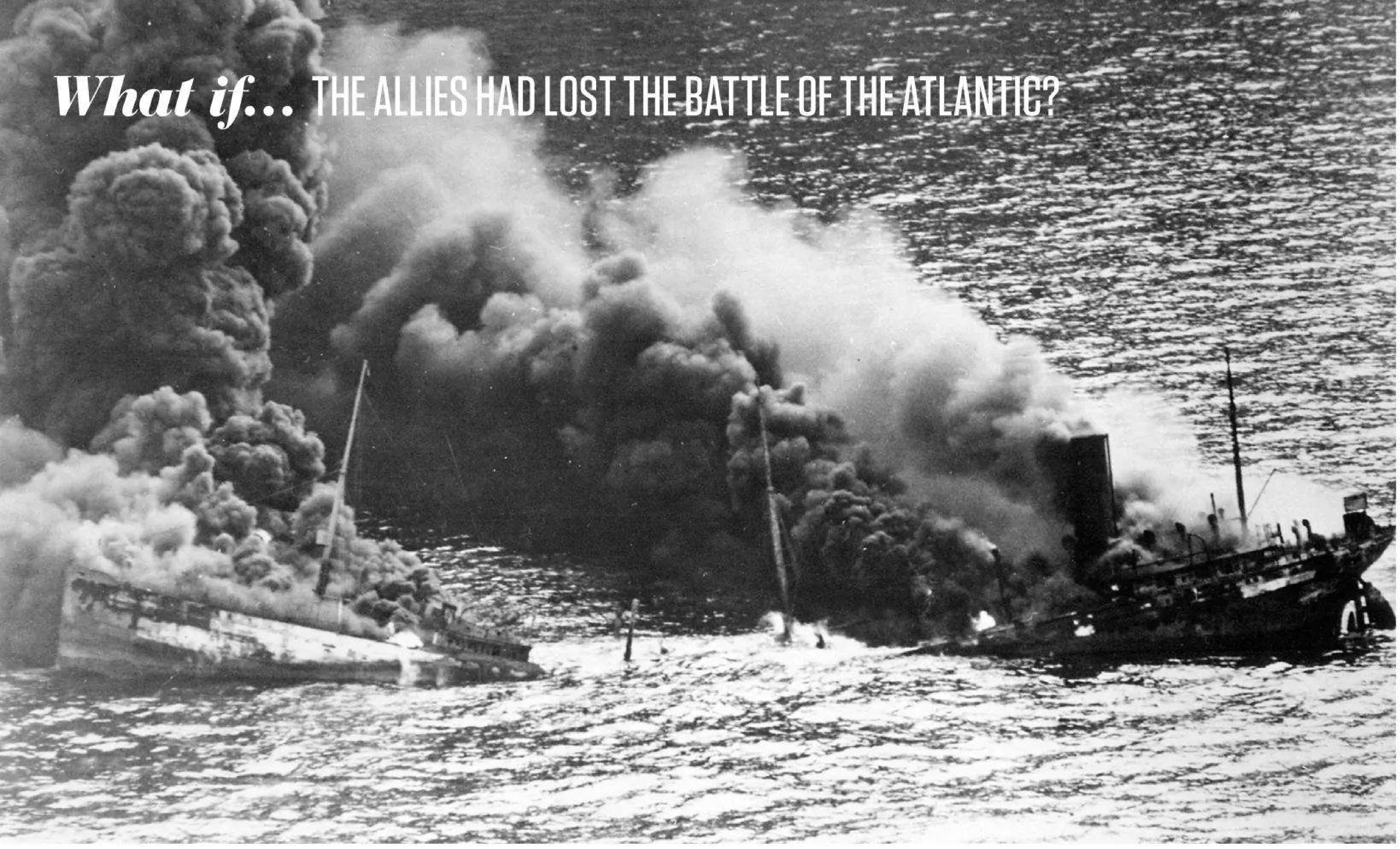
RIGHT
A gunner aboard a destroyer watches over a convoy off the coast of England



ABOVE
Allied tanker Dixie Arrow torpedoed by U-71 in 1942

ports along the English south and east coasts promptly cuts into British imports far more than anything that is done at sea because all of a sudden the major import harbours are closed and they have to reorient longshoremen and rolling stock and railways and the handling gear to the West Country ports, and that takes almost a year to do. The net result is a sharp decline in imports to Britain – they just don't have the port handling capability. But Germany does not have enough submarines. In January 1941 there are only eight German submarines at sea that are operational. You can't win the Battle of the Atlantic with eight submarines. The Germans pushed out as many surface vessels as they possibly could.

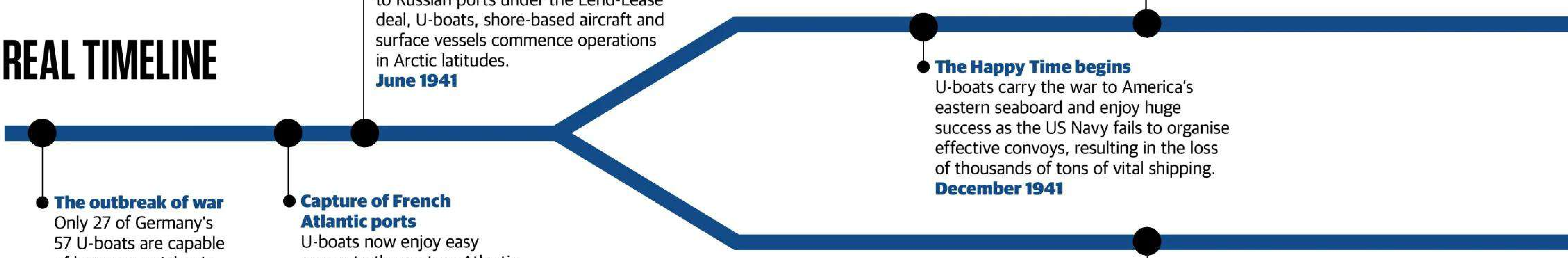
It is a very dangerous period for Britain in the winter of 1941 because Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, the two big battlecruisers, are loose in the North Atlantic. [Admiral] Hipper and Admiral Scheer are out in the North Atlantic. There are long-range Condors and Blohm & Voss flying-boats doing patrols. Some of the Condors are attacking shipping at sea, particularly in the east Atlantic. The Germans are beginning to use U-boat wolfpacks and achieve some dramatic successes. But it's never quite enough. They spent the winter of 1941 pulling the lion's tail and tweaking its ears, but when the fair weather of spring comes in April and May and they send Bismarck out, it is a totally changed operational environment.

If Britain had succumbed, could America have found another staging post for its entrance into the war in Europe?
Yes. In 1942, the Allies invade French North Africa, and the landings along the Moroccan coast are staged directly from the US eastern seaboard as part of Operation Torch. So the way back into Europe would have been, in some ways, the way that NATO subsequently planned to get back into Europe should Western Europe and Great Britain fall to the Soviet Union. That is to work their way through North Africa and then eventually through the Iberian Peninsula.

Presumably, though, without Britain as an ally, America might not have declared war on Germany in December 1941?
From what we know of the Americans in 1939-41, it is not clear whether they might have made an accommodation with the new regime in Europe and lived with it. America had not begun to mobilise, seriously, by the summer of 1941. It was still building up its fleet and

> " The question becomes, does Britain capitulate, or does the British government go into exile and continue the war from the Empire and the Commonwealth? "

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?



REAL TIMELINE

The outbreak of war
Only 27 of Germany's 57 U-boats are capable of long-range Atlantic operations. Germany's Z-plan aims to build 300 U-boats, enough to strangle Britain. It takes a further 20 months to reach this tally.
September 1939

Capture of French Atlantic ports
U-boats now enjoy easy access to the eastern Atlantic. Despite the delineation of a neutral zone where American ships will sink marauding subs, the Germans soon extend operations to the central and western Atlantic.
June 1940

Arctic operations begin
When Britain begins running supplies of raw materials and finished hardware to Russian ports under the Lend-Lease deal, U-boats, shore-based aircraft and surface vessels commence operations in Arctic latitudes.
June 1941

The Happy Time begins
U-boats carry the war to America's eastern seaboard and enjoy huge success as the US Navy fails to organise effective convoys, resulting in the loss of thousands of tons of vital shipping.
December 1941

Pearl Harbor attacked
Carrier-based Japanese aircraft launch their surprise strike on the US Pacific Fleet. A day later, the United States declares war on Japan. Three days after this, the US declares war on Germany.
December 1941

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

Z-plan hits target
The Kriegsmarine beefs up production and hits its target of 300 U-boats, with most capable of long-range Atlantic voyages. The blockade of British ports puts enormous pressure on Churchill.
June 1941

the infrastructure for the huge army that would appear in Europe in 1944. It is just not in place at this time, so I think America would have had to make a serious decision. My best guess – and it can be no more than that – is that they would have made an accommodation with Nazi Europe and made every effort to make sure that Britain was as far as they got [on their westward expansion].

If Britain had fallen, do you think Churchill would have been able to continue fighting from bases in Canada and other parts of the Empire and Commonwealth?

Canada declared war against Nazi Germany, not as part of the British Empire but as an independent, self-governing nation. So it is entirely conceivable that the war would have continued. There were certainly plans to move the British fleet to Canada, and ports along the Canadian east coast were surveyed to see just where the Royal Navy could shelter. So the question becomes, does Britain capitulate like the French did and make accommodation, or does the British government go into exile and continue the war from the Empire and the Commonwealth? That would also change the situation for the Americans.

If Britain had fallen in 1941, how would that have affected Russian resistance to Nazi Germany?

The assumption is that Britain would have fallen in the spring of 1941 because it is difficult to figure the scenario before or after that. And by then Brits have already signed the Lend-Lease deal and are already trans-shipping vast amounts of goods destined for Britain like American fighters, P40-Warhawks and Tomahawks, straight to Russia. Britain is also sending a large number of its tanks to Russia in the autumn of 1941. I have read recently that perhaps as much as upwards of 40 per cent of the tanks that stand between the Germans and Moscow in the first week of December 1941 were Matildas and Valentine tanks from British factories. If that's the case, there is a very narrow window in which British production and Lend-Lease material, including Hurricane fighters, get to Russia just at the most critical moment of the German advance on Moscow. And many historians assume – though I don't know that it's a fair assumption – that had Moscow fallen, the Soviet Union would have capitulated. I am not entirely convinced of that but, if so, then the British aid to the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1941 might well have been one of the most singular, decisive things that Britain did to ensure the Allied victory in World War II.

BELOW German U-boat bases in France were hundreds of miles closer to the Atlantic than the bases on the North Sea

LA BASE
sous-marine
BASSINS DE LUMIÈRES

© Alamy x2

Stalingrad comes to an end
Arguably the single most crucial battle of the European war concludes with Germany's defeat in the ruins of Stalingrad. Thousands of German troops become POWs.
February 1943

The Longest Day
Germany is stretched to breaking point as Allied forces, including a vast American army, launch D-Day operations with the invasion of Normandy.
6 June 1944

Hitler commits suicide
The war in Europe nears its end as Hitler takes his own life in his Berlin bunker shortly before the Red Army arrives. Unconditional surrender follows a week later on 7 May.
April 1945

The US drops the bomb
World War II nears its end after a B-29 bomber drops the world's first deployed atomic bomb on Hiroshima, destroying 90 per cent of the city and instantly killing 80,000 people.
August 1945

Royal Navy moves to Canada/Ceylon
Churchill relocates the Royal Navy to Halifax in Canada, and Trincomalee in Ceylon, the only Empire-Commonwealth ports capable of handling such warships.
August 1941

Britain falls to the Reich
With food supplies dwindling and the U-boat wolfpacks emerging pre-eminent in the Atlantic, the British government goes into exile to continue the war from the Empire.
November 1941

The US declines Germany deal
Roosevelt strongly considers negotiations with Nazi Germany, but pressure from Britain, Canada and Hitler's early success in Russia prompts him to enter the war in Europe.
December 1941

The Allies take North Africa
British Empire forces in Africa, supplied via the Suez Canal, have taken control of the continent. The invasion of Italy is planned.
November 1942

D-Day preparations begin in earnest
Operation Torch is no longer a requirement given Allied success in Africa. American GIs begin arriving in Morocco and Algeria in preparation for a strike at mainland Europe.
January 1943

Second Battle of Moscow
The German Sixth Army takes Stalingrad and Hitler launches a second assault on Moscow. Yet Russia still stands.
March 1943

Liberation of Great Britain
With his forces stretched thin following defeat at Kursk, Hitler withdraws from mainland Britain in a bid to shore up his defences in France. Churchill returns to Whitehall.
February 1944

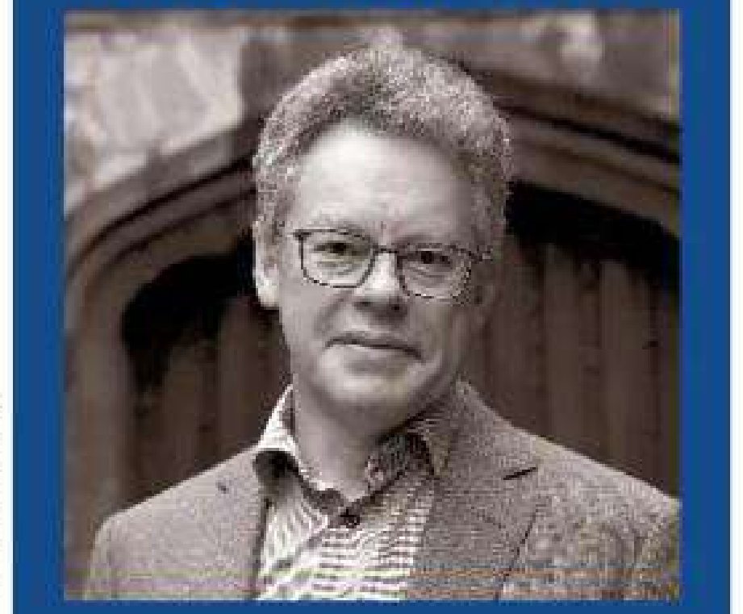
D-Day launches via Iberian peninsula
The Iberian peninsula becomes the staging post for the Allied push into Western Europe.
June 1944

What if...

THE ALLIES HADN'T CRACKED THE ENIGMA CODE?

Without breaking Nazi Germany's encrypted messages, Allied forces would have lost the intelligence war, altering events around the world

INTERVIEW WITH



© D Turing

Sir Dermot Turing

Dermot is an author, historian and the nephew of Alan Turing. He has written and spoken on the Bletchley Park codebreakers countless times. Turing's latest book, *Enigma Traitors: The Struggle to Lose the Cipher War*, is available now.

When radio communication was first deployed on the battlefield in the late-19th century, military commanders faced a challenge: how would they ensure the wireless messages didn't fall into the hands of the enemy? One of Nazi Germany's answers to this was Enigma, an encoding machine that had unprecedented capabilities to encrypt communications, with only the intended recipient with their own Enigma able to decrypt and read the message. Breaking the Enigma encryption took painstaking effort by Allied forces, including the Polish intelligence services and the work of Alan Turing and his team at Bletchley Park. Breaking the Enigma code provided essential intelligence to Allied commanders, particularly in the Battle of the Atlantic. Here, historian and author Sir Dermot Turing discusses what could have changed if the Allies had never achieved such an extraordinary code-breaking feat.

What was the Enigma code and why did it prove such a formidable challenge for codebreakers?

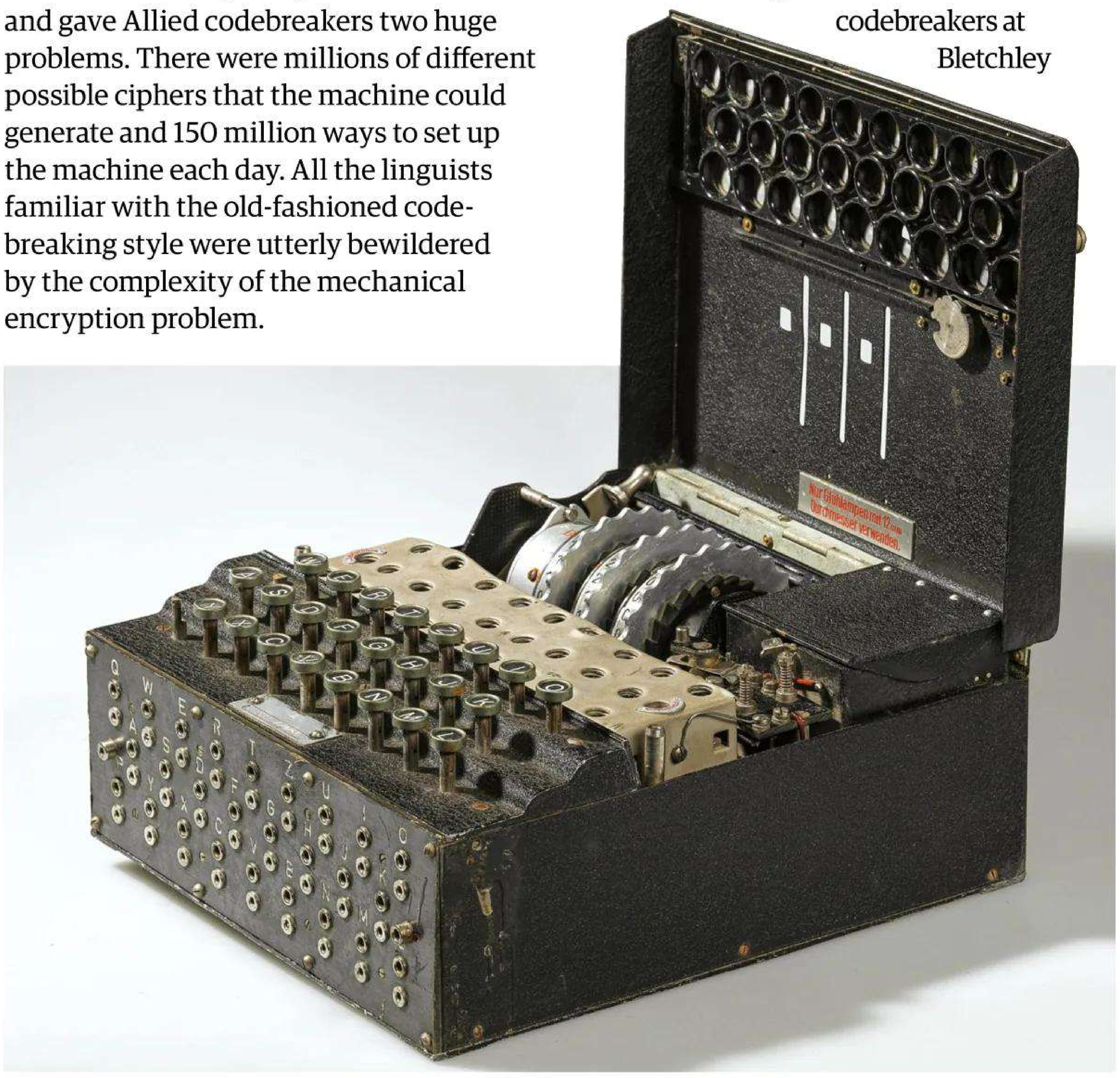
At the beginning of the Great War, the introduction of radio communications made armed forces aware that they needed to think about encryption. Broadcast media was accessible to anybody who happened to be listening. They devised primitive encryption techniques whereby common words or phrases could be disguised by having code sequences held in a codebook.

However, these codebooks were easy to reconstruct through linguistic analysis. During the interwar period, the Germans invented the Enigma machine, which enciphered a message, so every letter was converted. Instead of following a classic Caesar Cipher, where a letter is changed in the same way each time, the encryption happens a different way every time a letter on an Enigma machine is pressed. The Enigma machine exploited this idea of changing the cipher every time through a set of rotors, which constantly changed the pattern of encryption.

By the time World War II came, the Germans had souped up their machine and gave Allied codebreakers two huge problems. There were millions of different possible ciphers that the machine could generate and 150 million ways to set up the machine each day. All the linguists familiar with the old-fashioned code-breaking style were utterly bewildered by the complexity of the mechanical encryption problem.

Describe the development of the Polish Bomba and how Alan Turing used it to develop the Turing-Welchman Bombe?

To successfully tackle the Enigma problem, the answer was not to try linguistic interpolation but to find a mechanical solution to reduce the search space enough to be manageable. Polish codebreakers decided to apply an old codebreakers' technique in a new and imaginative way, which reached the codebreakers at Bletchley



© Getty Images

RIGHT
It is thought that breaking the Enigma code shortened the war, saving millions

Luftwaffen-Maſchinen-Schlüſſel Nr. 649
Achtung! Schlüſſelmittel dürfen nicht unverſehrt in Feindeshand fallen. Bei Gefahr reſtlo
Walzenlage
Ringſtellung
Stecker
am Steckerbrett

THE PAST

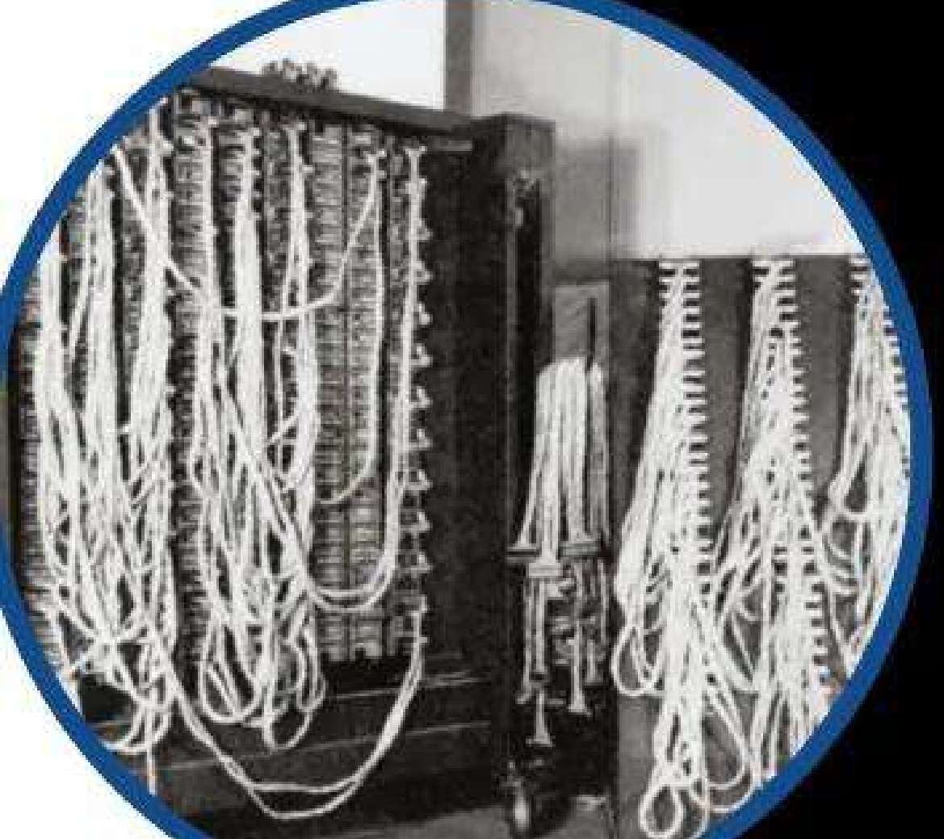
1932

MARIAN REJEWSKI CRACKS THE ENIGMA

Six years after the Wehrmacht began using the Enigma machine to encrypt messages in 1926, Polish mathematician Marian Rejewski cracked the Enigma code. After obtaining the daily keys used in Enigma machines in September and October 1932 from a French spy, Rejewski made comparisons with intercepted messages to uncover the internal rotor wiring of Enigma machines. He then built the Bomba machine in order to decrypt Enigma messages reliably.

1940

CONSTRUCTION OF VICTORY



At the outbreak of the war, Germany made their Enigma machines more complex, rendering the Polish Bomba obsolete. However, Alan Turing learnt from Rejewski's Bomba to create his mechanised Bombe. The first successful machine was called Victory and began codebreaking on 14 March 1940. Collaboration with Gordon Welchman led to the more efficient Agnus Dei Bombe design and by the end of the war, 211 Bombe machines had been built.

1943

A TURNING POINT IN THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Enigma intelligence began to be used effectively during the summer and autumn of 1941, particularly in the Battle of the Atlantic. Routing convoys around U-boat patrols reduced merchant shipping losses by two-thirds. A turning point was finally reached during Black May in 1943, when a quarter of operational U-boats were destroyed.

ABOVE
Intelligence gained through Enigma messages significantly disrupted Italian convoys bound for North Africa

BELOW
Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, which was the centre of Allied code-breaking efforts

Park weeks before the outbreak of war in the summer of 1939.

They realised that you could match up what you thought the intercepted message might say based on the tendency for military communications to happen in a stereotypical way. There are words and phrases that you would expect to find if you know enough about the unit sending the message. For example, the German word for 'weather forecast' is very long, so you can match up the letters in the expected plain text – 'wettervorhersage' – with the gobbledegook intercepted from the wireless. You could then ask if it is possible to get the letters for 'wettervorhersage' from the Enigma machine's initial setting and get the plain text encrypted in the observed way.

That is the essential principle of Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman's adaptation of the Polish technology, which was designed to simplify the search process by having the machine weed out vast numbers of impossible solutions. Of course, it might not work if the word 'wettervorhersage' doesn't appear in the message, but this is an area where success breeds success. The more messages you decrypt, the more likely it is that you can predict the content in the next one. By developing this machine, called the Bombe, the Brits were beginning to get on top of the German air force Enigma messages by autumn 1940. As the war developed, they were slowly able to get on top of the German army and the German navy messages, too.

Can you point to any specific events you would define as having a significant impact on the Enigma code being cracked?
There's quite a lot of hype about this and we need to be slightly wary. People tend to imagine that everything from Bletchley Park was the product of Enigma codebreaking. It's not always possible to work out the type of intelligence used in certain circumstances. However, you can point confidently to the turnaround in the Battle of the Atlantic in the middle of 1943, where the British and the Americans got on top of the U-boat Enigma. That meant they could begin safely routing convoys away from U-boats, as well as aggressively target them. It's unsure whether this would have been possible without the contribution of Enigma intelligence.

You can also point to the battles in North Africa earlier in the war, where information about Rommel's supply lines was seriously enhanced by breaking Italian Enigma messages. The Italians were responsible for the trans-Mediterranean convoys that

> “ We’re accustomed to thinking that the Allies won the intelligence war because of the genius of Bletchley Park, but it could have been the other way around ”

were supplying Rommel. Breaking their Enigma messages and other machine ciphers allowed Italian convoys to be targeted and gave a good picture of Rommel’s complaints about his supply needs. In Africa, a good combination of different sources came together to help Bernard Montgomery in his successful campaign.

If the Enigma code hadn’t been cracked, what would the impact be on the quality of intelligence coming out of Bletchley Park?

One thing that struck me while working on my most recent book, *The Enigma Traitors*, is that the British were embarrassingly slow to realise that their codes, still of the Great War model, were being exploited. There was an ongoing complacency from the people who didn’t want to change anything.

The thing that made this bad news – according to the communications security people who were finally listened to – was that broken Enigma messages revealed that the Germans were deriving their intelligence from reading British codes. If the British had not been reading Enigma messages, then the happy state of disbelief would have continued. Had that mindset persisted, the consequence could have been that an awful lot of battles won by the Allies as a result of superior intelligence would have been turned around. The Germans would have been winning battles based on superior intelligence. The state of affairs in the early part of the war, where the Germans knew exactly where the convoys were, could have persisted across all theatres and armed forces. That is quite scary to think about. We’re accustomed to thinking that the Allies won the intelligence war because of the genius of Bletchley Park, but it could have been the other way around.

The turning point in the middle of 1943, when the battles of North Africa had been won and the Allies were beginning to win the Battle of the Atlantic, is crucially dependent on being on top of the German intelligence story. This probably would not have happened had the British not reluctantly changed their codes in June 1943. Not only did the Allies now know where the U-boats were in a convincing and permanent way, but the British were also no longer telling the Germans where they were.

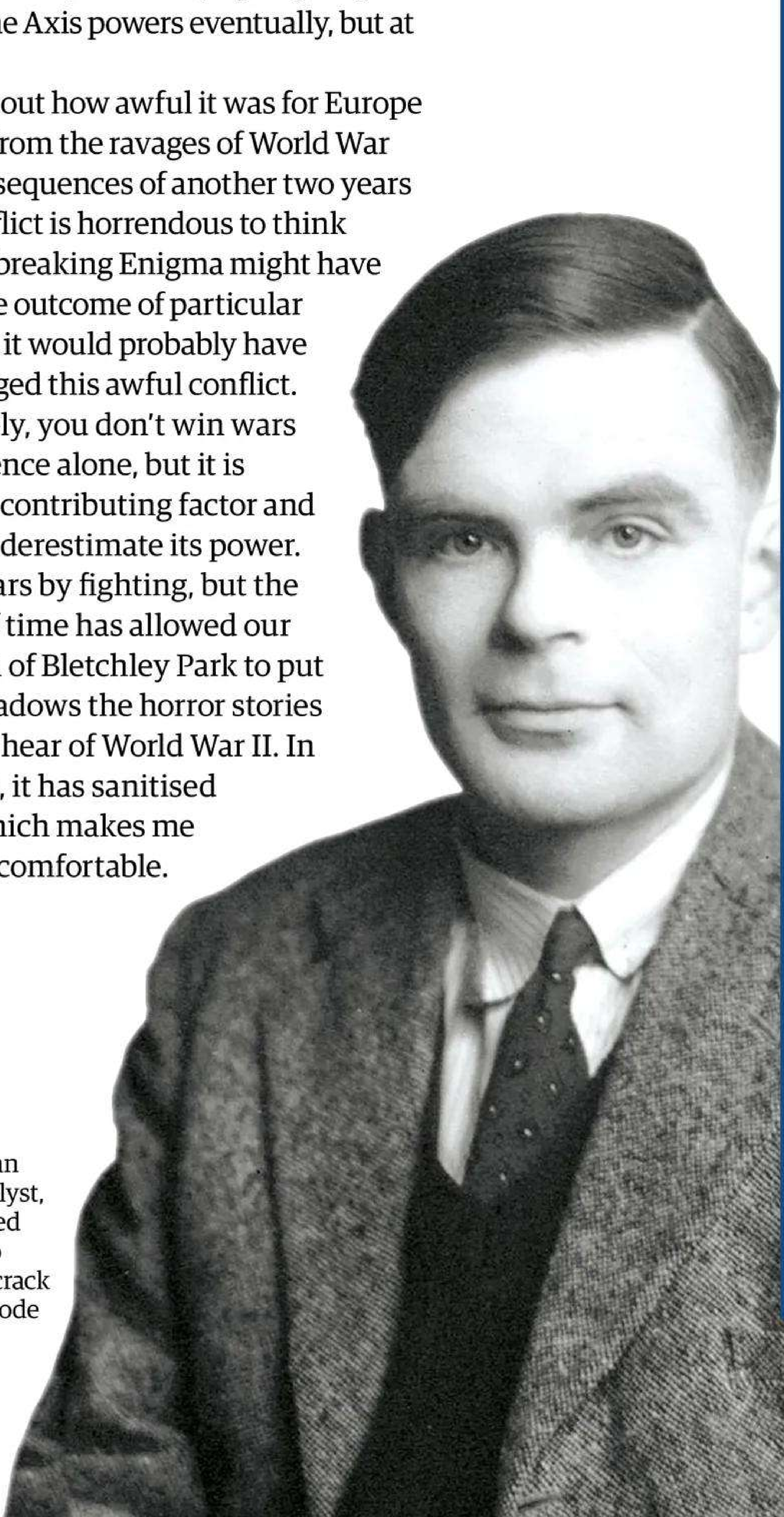
That contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic and the fact that the Germans had been shut out of Allied intelligence was crucial and dependent on reading Enigma. Meanwhile, because the Germans didn’t read much British high-level machine-enciphered traffic during World War II, they couldn’t access the same knowledge about their code-breaking efforts. That explains why the second part of the war was much more successful than the first.

Would failure to crack the Enigma code have been a fundamental crisis for the war effort?

It is difficult to argue with Professor Harry Hinsley, author of the official history of British intelligence in World War II, who was at Bletchley Park. His opinion was that the work of Bletchley Park as a whole, not just Enigma, had shortened the war by about two years, saving millions of lives. What he’s not saying is that it would have affected the outcome. The overwhelming might of the United States’ war machine, coupled with the rotten state of the Axis powers and their inability to bolster their efforts with some moral fibre, was always going to spell doom for the Axis powers eventually, but at what cost?

Think about how awful it was for Europe to recover from the ravages of World War II – the consequences of another two years of that conflict is horrendous to think about. Not breaking Enigma might have affected the outcome of particular battles, but it would probably have just prolonged this awful conflict.

Ultimately, you don’t win wars by intelligence alone, but it is certainly a contributing factor and let’s not underestimate its power. You win wars by fighting, but the distance of time has allowed our celebration of Bletchley Park to put into the shadows the horror stories we used to hear of World War II. In some ways, it has sanitised the war, which makes me slightly uncomfortable.



RIGHT
Alan Turing, mathematician and cryptanalyst, who developed the Bombe to consistently crack the Enigma code

THE POSSIBILITY

1939

AXIS WIN THE INTELLIGENCE WAR

Having failed to pick up warnings that the Axis forces are exploiting their Great War-era codes, the British would not have updated their encryption technology. Now, the Axis forces would have superior intelligence on the battlefield, which would have swung the tide of some battles.

1943

DISASTER FOR ALLIED CONVOYS

In May 1943, the U-boat strength peaked at 240 operational submarines. Without Enigma intelligence, Allied convoys wouldn’t have been able to manoeuvre around U-boat patrols, which would have been less vulnerable to Allied attack. German Admiral Karl Dönitz could finally have deployed his Wolfpack tactic as he imagined it with devastating effect.

1947

WAR IN EUROPE IS OVER

War finally comes to an end in the summer of 1947, but it is a pyrrhic victory for the Allies with millions more killed. Without Enigma intelligence, they have to fight desperately for every victory and the combined armed forces are on their knees. After two additional years of war, cities across Europe have faced wholesale destruction and it will take decades to recover.

IT'S V-E DAY!
Remember Pearl Harbor!

© Alamy, Getty Images

What if...

HITLER HAD TAKEN MOSCOW IN 1941?

The seizure of the Soviet capital might have prevented the attack on Pearl Harbor and sealed the fate of Western Europe

INTERVIEW WITH

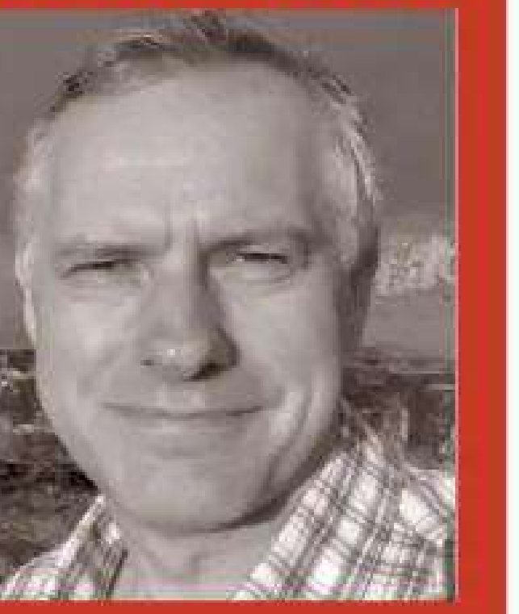


Image source: Professor Marc Milner

Professor Marc Milner

The director of the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society at the University of New Brunswick, Professor Marc Milner has written several books on World War II. This includes *Battle of the Atlantic*, which won the CP Stacey Prize for the best book on military history in Canada in 2004. His recent work has been on the Normandy campaign, including *Stopping The Panzers: The Untold Story Of D-Day*, which won the US Commission on Military History's James Collins Book Prize for 2014-15.

What if Hitler had taken Moscow as part of Operation Barbarossa?

Hitler, of course, had hoped to knock out the whole of the USSR in a campaign of six to ten weeks. Now, in retrospect, that was ridiculously overambitious.

The intelligence was wrong about the number of Soviet reserves and so on. However, if by some miracle they had been able to knock out the USSR, then you're left in a situation very similar to that which occurred in 1917-18 in World War I, where Germany managed to win on the Eastern Front.

The Bolshevik Revolution started, the Bolsheviks made peace with Imperial Germany and the Germans were able to concentrate on the Western Front. So you have that sort of situation and it really throws the future course of the war into doubt.

So what would Germany have needed to do in order to successfully invade the Soviet Union at the time?

There's a big debate about whether a victory was ever actually within Hitler's grasp. The debate is centred around the role of Moscow. There are those such as RHS Stolfi who have said that Operation Barbarossa was the turning point of the war, and that Germany would have been able to destroy the Soviet Union had they gone straight for Moscow in August 1941 (rather than diverting and focusing on taking the Ukraine and besieging Leningrad, and only later going against Moscow – by which point the weather was turning against them). Effectively, the question becomes 'What is enough to make the Soviet regime fall apart?'

That was what Germany achieved in 1917-18 – there were successive changes of regime, and the Bolsheviks were willing to make peace. However, what we know of the resilience of the Soviet regime in 1941-42 suggests that even the fall of Moscow might not have been enough for that to occur. In 1917 the Germans had not even come close to Moscow, they had only taken Kiev and Riga – and that alone was enough to knock out Tsarist Russia. The later Soviet regime seemed a lot more ruthless and inspired a lot more devotion among the population. And, of course, German atrocities had been such that even those who might have welcomed a change of overlord realised the Nazis were even worse than Stalin had been.

My own perspective is that I don't think Germany could easily have taken Moscow at any time in 1941. Had they taken it, they might have lost it immediately during a Soviet winter counteroffensive, in very much the same way they lost Stalingrad in 1942-43. And, just as happened to Napoleon, just taking Moscow doesn't necessarily bring Russia to collapse. That was Napoleon's nemesis. So, frankly, I find it very difficult to envisage how the Soviet regime could have been beaten in 1941. Conceivably, there was a possibility of an attritional defeat of the USSR in 1942, but the tide of resources was turning against Germany then. So I find it difficult to see how Germany would have been able practically to achieve this knockout victory, given Soviet reserves, given Soviet commitment and given the size of the country.

How would the Allies have reacted if Russia had fallen to the Axis?

A lot depends on at what stage this occurred and what else was happening around the world. Remember, what happened simultaneously with the decisive battle for Moscow was that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the Americans were brought fully into the war.

They had been helping the British significantly, but they weren't fully in the war until this surprise attack. And then Germany, of course, declared war on the United States. Had that happened, even if the Soviet Union had fallen at the same

© Alamy

RIGHT
Hitler's troops marched for weeks, covering a huge distance and ultimately stretching supply lines too thinly

“In 1917 the Germans had not even come close to Moscow” time, then you would have this ongoing war with Britain and America.

Imagine a nightmare scenario where war did not start between Germany and the United States after all. One way to avoid that would be for Japan not to attack Pearl Harbor, but instead to attack Siberia and gang up on the Soviet Union while it was on the ropes. And that might have helped with the collapse of the Soviet Union, because it was forces released from Siberia (when the Soviets realised Japan was not going to attack the USSR) that helped support the defence of Moscow.

For the British, all hope of victory would have effectively been lost, because the Americans would not be in the war at all.

Therefore, Germany could have perhaps presented Britain with a fait accompli, where its greatest continental ally had been defeated. Remember that was one reason why Napoleon attacked Russia, to remove Britain's last ally so the British had no further option to continue the war. And then you might have got some sort of stalemate situation.

So you can see a scenario where Hitler dominated the continent, but still would have had a considerable challenge in defeating Britain. However, with such German dominance, the war would have probably ground to a halt in effect. Britain would certainly have suffered great continuing losses, just as it did in reality with the loss of Tobruk in 1942, the U-Boat war, the Luftwaffe bombings, and so on. So in that scenario you can see Britain being cowed into some sort of bitter, albeit perhaps temporary, peace.

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

Signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pactaugust
Known as the Nazi-Soviet Pact or the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact, the agreement saw them agree to a fragile form of peace, although it didn't last for very long.
23 August 1939

Hitler launches Operation Barbarossa
Despite the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler becomes fixated on the idea of destroying the Soviet Union. He believes it weak enough to break with the Blitzkrieg tactics that also took France, Norway and many more. Spies loyal to the Soviet regime (including Richard Sorge, based in Japan) send word to Moscow that Hitler is planning to betray them, but Stalin refuses to believe them. Even when Axis forces cross the threshold into Soviet territory, Stalin initially orders artillery not to fire as he believes the invasion may have been greenlit without Hitler's permission. **22 June 1941**

The Luftwaffe crush the Soviet air fleet
By the end of the first week of the invasion, the Luftwaffe claimed it shot down over 3,000 Soviet aircraft, as the German war machine advances. Reports suggest only 78 German planes were lost. **29 June 1941**

Smolensk falls to the Nazis
The large city of Smolensk, one of the key strategic locations on the road to Moscow, falls as Hitler's pincer movement crushes any Soviet resistance.
16 July 1941

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

The Luftwaffe pummels the Soviet ground forces
Along with effectively disabling the Soviet air force, the Luftwaffe provide a two-pronged attack in the centre and the south, with a sustained campaign of aerial bombardment.
June-July 1941

Large scale atrocities are avoided
Hitler is convinced by his generals that a campaign of cleansing against Bolshevik Jews will turn the Russian people against them. However, a plan to purge the Bolshevik Jews remains until after Moscow falls.
July 1941

Would the success of Operation Barbarossa have lasted with the United States fully committed to the war?

Let's say the Soviet Union collapsed after Pearl Harbor, despite the Japanese having turned against America and brought the US fully into the war. That's much more akin to the situation in 1918 where the Germans won the war in the East, and brought forces back to the West to hold and possibly win. They failed in 1918 as US reinforcements poured in, but what might have happened in 1942-43 is a very interesting question, militarily. Assuming you don't get the compromise peace, would the Allies be able to win regardless?

There's a big debate in the literature about this. There are those such as Norman Davies – perhaps the chief exponent of this view – who say the whole war was dominated by the war in the East, that the war on the Western Front was a sideshow compared to its enormous scale and by implication the Soviets won the war rather than the Allies.

At the opposite extreme there's Phillips O'Brien, who says that the West could have defeated the Nazi war machine even if the Soviet Union had collapsed. So there's a significant scholarly debate on this. My own opinion falls somewhere in the middle. The release of a proportion of those forces on the Eastern Front would have allowed Germany to garrison continental Europe so heavily as to make it very difficult for the Allies to launch successful amphibious invasions.

The fact that there was no continuing land front as in France in 1918 would have been a big obstacle for the Allies. So I think one could perhaps have reached a stalemate in land terms, with the combatants divided by the Channel and the Mediterranean. What wouldn't have been a stalemate would have been the air war. The main plank to Phillips O'Brien's argument is that WWII was primarily an air war, and by 1942-43 the Allies were starting to gain air superiority over the Axis and bomb Germany.

So what you've got is a nightmarish situation for all concerned, where it would have taken years and years for the Allies to eventually wage a ground war against Nazi Germany, but they would have continued to fight the air war; so you would have German cities being incinerated despite the fact that, in theory, the Nazis controlled the continent. And, as we know, in 1945 the US got the atomic bomb.

So you could argue that, in 1945, the Germans would lose anyway because they would get the same treatment the Japanese received at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And given that Germany would have been in a far better territorial and resource position than Japan, it would have taken a significantly larger number of bombs to defeat Hitler's regime.

LEFT The Soviets were producing tanks on par with the Germans, but that production was partially halted for months as factories were packed up and moved away from German hands

RIGHT Hitler was determined to use his tactics of shock and awe on the Soviets, and such a course of action worked for the first few weeks

© Alamy x2

The Nazi encirclement is complete
Hitler orders his commanders to obliterate Soviet forces in Smolensk and Ukraine, rather than push on with all haste to Moscow, which is no longer the main target. **19 July 1941**

Siege of Leningrad begins
While Germany would never fully take the city of Leningrad, it would effectively lock it down into a blockade that lasts until 1943. **8 September 1941**

Soviet armies are crippled
Much of the Soviet forces have now been obliterated by the Axis. Soviet forces return to reinforce Moscow. **18 September 1941**

Hitler orders Operation Typhoon
With weather conditions ideal, and the Russian winter holding off, Hitler orders the Axis forces to attack Moscow. **2 October 1941**

The siege grinds to a halt
Rain, snow and a supply line that's stretched too thin sees the Axis attack on Moscow stall. Hitler reluctantly orders his forces to temporarily withdraw from besieging the city. **5 December 1941**

The Soviet counteroffensive begins
With the Germans struggling to deal with the weather conditions the Soviets began a brutal counteroffensive to drive the Axis back. **5 December 1941**

Russian resources come into play
As the Axis pushes further into Central Russia, Hitler orders that all disenfranchised Soviet soldiers be offered the chance to enlist. Soviet armour is also repurposed to bolster German forces. **August 1941**

Soviets destroy the oil fields
Hitler is keen to gain control of the oil fields in the Caucasus. While the Nazis occupy those on the outlying reaches, Stalin orders the destruction of those that remain in Soviet power. **September 1941**

Moscow surrenders to the Axis
Despite a quick counteroffensive, the city ultimately surrenders to the Nazi war machine. Resistance is still heavy, and German losses have been considerable, but the USSR is beginning to crumble. **October 1941**

Smolensk and Kiev fall
Kiev and Smolensk fall faster due to an accelerated campaign of air bombardment and advancing armour. The cities are levelled and all counterattacks defended, mainly due to Hitler's desire to move on Moscow. **August 1941**

Leningrad siege begins
Hitler's generals advised him that Leningrad should be forced into a blockade, but that the bulk of the German forces and new Soviet defectors should push directly onto Moscow before the winter. **Late August 1941**

Siege on Moscow begins far earlier
Stalin's purges and campaign of fear has created a disconnect with some of his people. Hitler uses this fact to take many airfields and factories on his way to Moscow. This bolsters his supply lines. **Late September 1941**

Moscow begins to fall
With bolstered supply lines, a larger army and a diminished response from the Soviet partisans, Stalin tries to oversee the defence of the city. By now the Germans are enforcing an encirclement of Moscow. **September-October 1941**

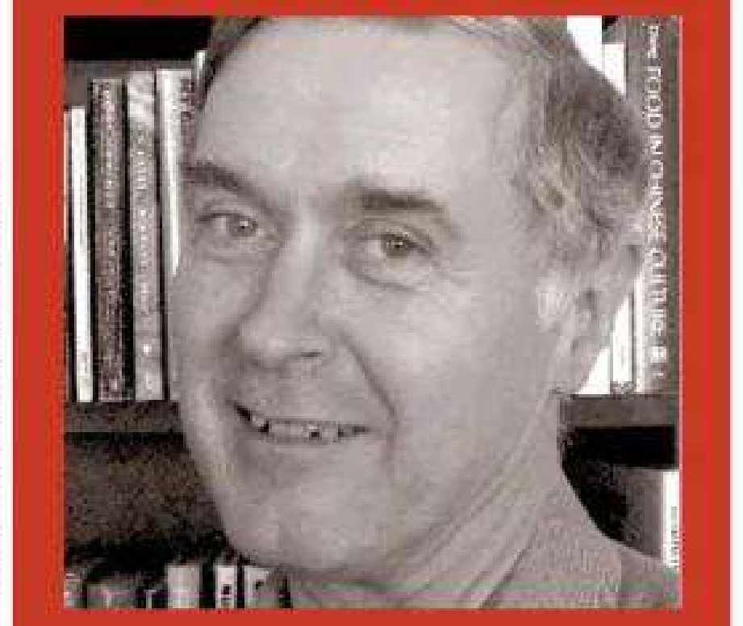
Continental Europe under Nazi control
With the collapse of the Soviet Union, every other state is forced to surrender. Britain now remains isolated as the Nazi menace grows ever stronger. **November 1941-January 1942**

What if...

JAPAN HAD NOT STRUCK PEARL HARBOR?

Discover how the world may have looked without the Japanese attack on US soil in 1941

INTERVIEW WITH



© Professor Robert Cribb

Professor Robert Cribb

Professor Cribb is a lecturer at ANU College of Asia and the Pacific in Canberra. His research interests have covered the changing face of Asia in the wake of World War II, in particular Indonesia and its war of independence with the Dutch after the fall of Japanese rule.

What would have happened if Japan had not struck Pearl Harbor?
History would have turned out very differently. For a start, it would mean Japan was not going to expand its empire into Southeast Asia – because that is what provoked Pearl Harbor. Instead, they would have been concentrating their war efforts solely in China, which was a conflict that began in 1937. Now, China proved to be more than Japan could chew in diplomatic and military terms. Plus, the USA had its own interests in China and that was what, ultimately, set them to war with Japan. The USA had imposed a trade and financial embargo against Japan. As a result, Japanese financial assets in the USA had been frozen and they did not have the means to buy anything from abroad. So to avoid Pearl Harbor, Japan would need to do something to accede to American demands – including pulling out from China. My guess is that the Chinese nationalist government, under Chiang Kai-shek, would have come to terms with Hideki Tojo's government in Tokyo to beat the communists. History would still need to be quite different – for instance, the Japanese would have had to maintain more control over the troops in Nanjing, and not let them massacre an entire city of people, but if things had been less brutal, we can imagine a possible peace treaty between the two countries. Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government deeply feared Mao and so did the Japanese. So you would not have had Mao – and China would be totally changed. I think Japan would also have demanded access to Chinese markets. It would be a much more influential and powerful country after the end of the war. And, of course, you would not have had the atomic bomb.

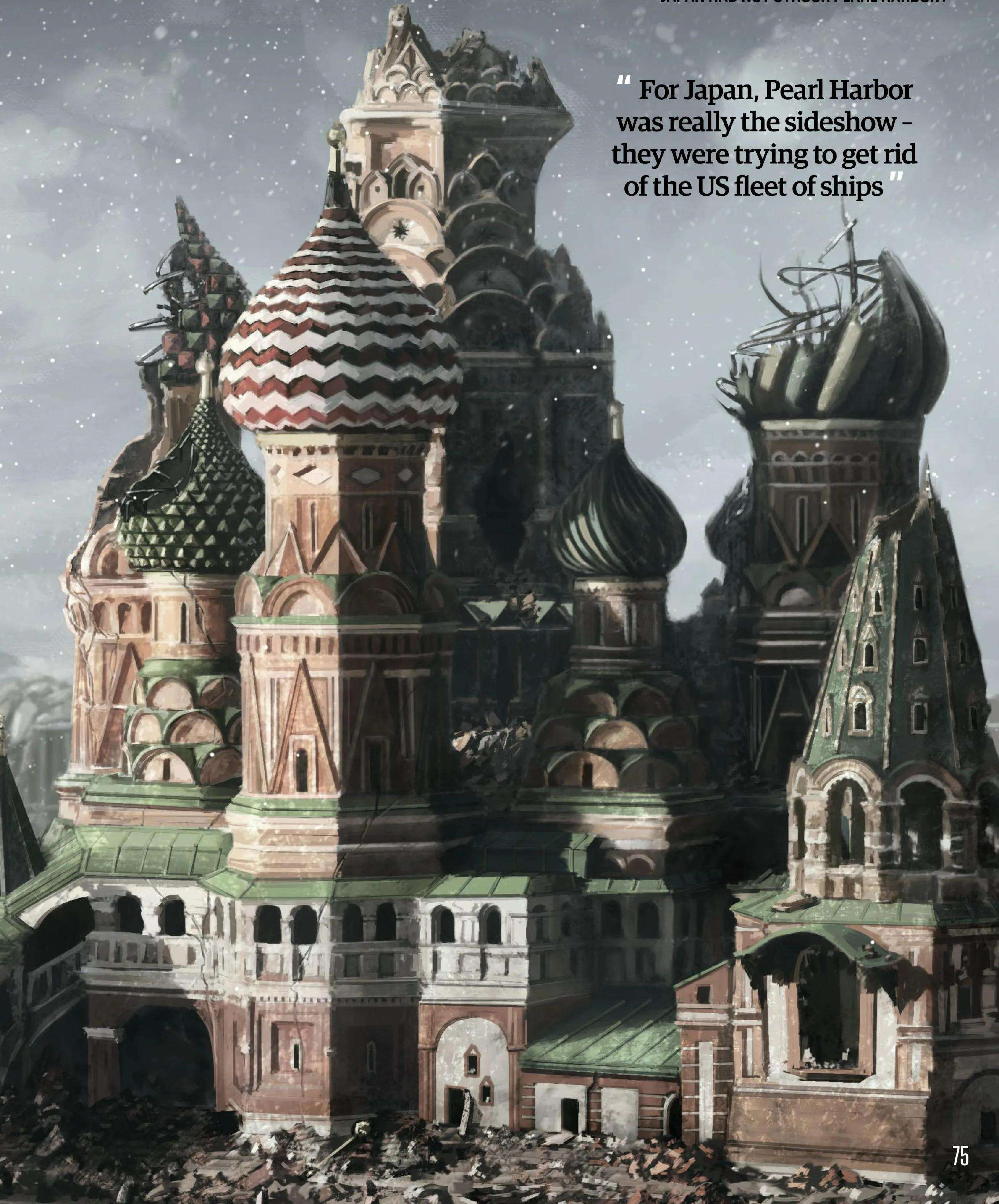
Do you think the USA would have eventually dropped an atomic bomb somewhere anyway? At the time, Eisenhower was eager to test it out. Churchill, let us not forget, was considering battling Stalin immediately after the Nazis surrendered. Perhaps Eisenhower would have used it against Stalin after the formation of the Soviet bloc in the wake of the fall of Berlin?
I don't know if I can make a reliable judgement on that but you are correct – the Americans were thirsting to try the bomb out in a real situation and the idea that they could do it as a pre-emptive strike against the Soviet Union is plausible. Japan would not be the Japan that has the resentment it has now – as the sole country to have been subjected to atomic war – but I suspect it would probably have realised that its economy could win them peace and influence rather than the use of empire and force. I do believe democracy would have won in the end.

At the time, Japan had also conquered Taiwan and Korea. Of course, Chiang Kai-shek fled from China to establish a modern Taiwan that exists, to this day, in a state of uncertainty as a broadly unrecognised 'nation' while Korea was thrust into war. If Pearl Harbor had not happened, how would this have changed?
Taiwan and Korea would eventually have become independent but under tight Japanese control. As with all empires, the Japanese one would crumble, but I suspect Taiwan and Korea would have become de facto puppet states – possibly even today. Of course, there would have been no Korean War and no split between

CAUTION
NARROW BRIDGE

© Alamy

RIGHT
Japanese soldiers crossing the border from China into the British colony of Hong Kong in 1941



> "For Japan, Pearl Harbor was really the sideshow – they were trying to get rid of the US fleet of ships"

ABOVE
Troops of Chinese 179th Brigade departing Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China for the front lines in 1937

the North and the South. And modern Taiwan would not be recognised as a rogue Chinese province by Beijing.

Hypothetically, could Japan have found a way to expand its empire into Southeast Asia without attacking Pearl Harbor?
Japan would have been very vulnerable in the rest of Southeast Asia if it had not conquered the Philippines – and that country was an American protectorate at the time so they had to hit the USA. Burma was also attractive because it allowed Japan to cut off supplies to the Chinese from the UK. But if you take on Burma you are taking on the British and that means you needed to take on Malaysia and Singapore as well. Japan's strategy had to be all or nothing – they had to take all of Southeast Asia, except Thailand, who were a close ally because there was nothing strategically useful about them. However, French Indochina and Dutch Indonesia were definitely going to be invaded. For Japan, Pearl Harbor was really the sideshow – they were trying to get rid of the US fleet of ships and attempting to stop supplies to the British. It was not about taking Hawaii. Their interest was in expanding to Southeast Asia and removing the Western powers.

Let's try another hypothetical situation – Japan decides not to attack the Philippines but withdraws from China. Might the USA have come to terms with loosening their trade embargo? And might Japan have retained its empire in Southeast Asia?
I think this is very unlikely. The Philippines is in the middle of the South China Sea and it was able to block Japanese supply routes so it really had to fall. But let's imagine a situation where Japan is just battling against the European colonial powers – it wants them out of there and Tokyo wants to run things. The British were not strong at the time and they did not fight a strong war in Burma. In the end they were only able to battle the Japanese because of help from the Americans. The French, certainly, would not have been able to fight back until 1945, so Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos would have remained Japanese. In Indonesia, the Japanese invasion was transformative because it broke down Dutch power. It also increased Indonesian confidence and the movement for independence, which would have happened but they would have been fighting the Japanese. In the end, if this had transpired – and

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

Japan Invades Taiwan
Believe it or not but the road to Pearl Harbor begins here. The East Asian island is invaded by the Japanese, whose empire begins.
29 May – 21 October 1895

Japan creates the puppet state of Manchukuo
After the 1931 invasion of Manchuria, and believing that all of Asia should be unified under the rule of Emperor Hirohito, Japan creates a new state, Manchukuo, located in inner (Chinese) Mongolia.
15 September 1932

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War
Although tensions between the two countries had been high after the invasion of Manchuria and creation of Manchukuo, it is the increasing number of Japanese soldiers deployed to the mainland that finally breaks Chinese patience. When a Japanese private fails to return to his post, his squad demand to enter the walled town of Wanping. When the Chinese refuse, the Japanese respond with force. What may have been a simple disagreement was the spark that lit a brutal eight-year war. **7 July 1937**

Pearl Harbor is struck
A surprise attack on the naval base in Hawaii, an attempt to cripple the US Navy and halt supplies, gives the White House full public support to enter World War II – in Asia and Europe. **7 December 1941**

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War
Japan's most challenging battlefront since its annexation of Taiwan and Korea many decades prior begins. However, the army – despite its reputation for brutality – attempts to win over hearts and minds. Nanjing is treated especially carefully.
7 July 1937

we take out the Philippines and Pearl Harbor – you have another very different history. The Vietnam War, for instance, does not take place. The Viet Minh would have fought the Japanese and, I suspect, have won. The Japanese were not good with insurgencies. They tended to react brutally, which alienated the populations they were trying to rule – again, look at China. So I think Japan would have handed over independence in these areas, but they would have given the power to people they saw as safe. In turn the local revolutionary movements probably would have overthrown them anyway, such as Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and the Western colonial powers would not have returned. Malaysia, I suspect, would have fallen to the communists without the British back in power.

Would the USA have become involved in the war without Pearl Harbor?
Yes, I think they would have. Roosevelt saw the Nazis as evil and he did want to get involved – but it was winning over the American public that was his problem. I think he would eventually have found a way to justify fighting in Europe. I think it is possible that the USA would not have become involved in Asia, which means – as we just touched upon – you would not have the 20th century as it currently existed, right down to Pol Pot in Cambodia.

Stalin had a non-aggression pact with the Japanese. But on 9 August 1945, he also declared war on the territory. Was this too little too late? How could the Russians have influenced the outcome of all this?
It is interesting because, until Pearl Harbor, the Japanese army felt their next war was going to be with the Soviet Union. They fought them on the borders of Manchukuo and they were chastened by that experience. The outbreak of war with China was in many ways not what the Japanese expected. I think they were anticipating that Stalin would break that pact at some point.

Finally, can you think of any way that the USA and Japan might not have gone to war with each other?
I think we can imagine a possible circumstance where Japan concentrates its troops in China, and sets up puppet administrations that actually function. The USA, at the time, wanted free trade in Asia, and Japan was looking to create closed areas of financial interest. So let's imagine that Japan did just enough in China for the USA that the White House relaxed its trade ban. In theory, that could have stopped Pearl Harbor. But the main thing that would have stopped the attack on Pearl Harbor is Germany. At the time of the attack, Germany looked as if it was winning in Europe. Japan felt it was going to be on the winning side of the war and it was part of this all-conquering fascist Axis. Six months later, though, Germany was in retreat. If that had happened I don't think Japan would have launched an attack on Pearl Harbor.

ABOVE
The USS Arizona burning after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

Invasion of the Philippines
With their sights on the oil-rich Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), the Japanese attack and conquer the American protectorate of the Philippines. Manila becomes one of the biggest victims of the whole of World War II. **8 December 1941**

Fall of Hong Kong
The British colony of Hong Kong surrenders to Japan. Churchill considers it a disaster as this marks the very first British territory to surrender to fascism. Burma (now Myanmar), British Borneo, Malaysia and Singapore would soon follow. **25 December 1941**

Dropping of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki
Eager to test out the power of nuclear warfare, President Eisenhower makes the controversial decision to engulf two of Japan's major cities in a mushroom cloud of death and radiation. The cost to civilian lives remains controversial. **6 August and 9 August 1945**

Tokyo surrenders and retreats from its colonies
The war in Asia comes to a conclusion. Japan retreats from all of its territories, but fighting between the Western powers and their 'liberated' populations continues for years, and in some cases decades. **2 September 1945**

The USA threatens to freeze Japanese assets
The USA requests that Japan withdraw from China or else all assets will be frozen. Japan begins talks with the White House about a resolution regarding China. **26 July 1941**

Japan removes itself from Hitler's sphere of influence
With rumours that Stalin is prepared to tear up his non-aggression pact with Tokyo, Japan proclaims it is no longer aligned with fascism. **20 August 1941**

Talks with Chiang Kai-shek
Hideki Tojo's government speaks to Chiang Kai-shek about joining forces against the communist army of Mao. Once the communists fall, Japan agrees to leave China. **28 December 1941**

Defeat of the Chinese communists
One of the bloodiest struggles of the war comes to a close. Japan wins cautious plaudits for assisting Chiang Kai-shek in his vision for a unified, Western-friendly China. **1 March 1944**

Stalin becomes involved in the war in Asia
Aghast at Japan's aggression towards the Chinese communists, Stalin orders the Red Army to strike Taiwan and Korea, hoping to gain a foothold in the continent. **31 May 1945**

Eisenhower drops a nuclear bomb on Moscow
With Stalin's forces brutally occupying Taiwan and Korea, the president's flirtation with nuclear weaponry becomes a reality. Moscow surrenders all territories. **6 August 1945**

'Comrade Godzilla'
Inspired by the bombing of Moscow, the creation of 'Comrade Godzilla' – a mutated red lizard that trashes the Russian capital – thrills viewers all across the world. **9 June 1955**

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What if…

JAPAN HAD WON AT MIDWAY?

A victory this vital would have kept Japan's hope of dominance in the Pacific War alive

INTERVIEW WITH

© J Buckley

Professor John Buckley

John is professor of military history at the University of Wolverhampton, UK, where he is convener of an online MA military history programme. He is also the author of *Armchair General: Can You Defeat the Nazis?* (2021).

The surprise Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor had left the US Pacific Fleet reeling and badly wounded. Six months later, the Japanese naval command had set their sights on the US Pacific base at Midway. Once secured, they could launch a further attack on Pearl Harbor, further damaging the US capabilities in the region and leaving them free to consolidate their dominance. Badly miscalculating the morale and capability of the Americans, the larger Japanese force found itself in a closer and more even combat than was planned. The outcome was on a knife-edge, but with a Japanese victory, the war in the Pacific would take a very different turn.

What would have had to be different in the battle for a Japanese victory?

Though the US victory at Midway has variously been described as a miracle or incredible, it was a quite evenly matched battle. Despite the Japanese having many more ships, at the sharp end the forces were fairly comparable, particularly in carriers and air power. What tipped the battle in the Americans' favour more than anything else was superior signals intelligence gathering and interpretation. Skilful cryptanalysis by the American team at Pearl Harbor handed Admiral Chester Nimitz and his staff a huge advantage when preparing for the battle. The Americans were alerted to the Japanese plan and intentions, and consequently positioned their carrier forces to exploit the advantage.

Therefore, to change the outcome radically, Admiral Nimitz would have had to disregard the intelligence he was afforded by his code-breaking team, or act far more cautiously in response to it. Though unlikely, such a reaction would have probably reduced the battle to a scrappy and inconclusive exchange, much as Coral Sea had been and the subsequent engagements that would unfold in the Solomons battles in 1942.

To turn the battle decisively in favour of the Japanese, their intelligence staff would have had to put the pieces together and alert Admiral Yamamoto to the likelihood that the Americans were aware that an attack towards Midway was imminent. Indeed, there were hints in the intelligence gathered by the Japanese that this was the case, but they failed to process and interpret the evidence appropriately. If Yamamoto had been so warned, however, he might have adapted his plan, sprung a nasty surprise on the US carriers, and achieved a major success. If Nimitz had lost two or all three of his carriers at Midway without inflicting similar losses on the enemy, the following months would have proved very tricky for the US Navy in the Pacific.

What would possibly have been Japan's next move?

In the aftermath of the US Navy's carrier fleet in the Pacific being destroyed, it is enticing to imagine that the Japanese might have moved quickly to attack and occupy Pearl Harbor. This would undoubtedly have proved calamitous for the US and would have afforded the Japanese a huge strategic advantage in the Pacific. Yet, such an undertaking

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RIGHT
The Japanese felt their forces to be superior

THE PAST

RUN UP TO 3 JUNE 1942

MANOEUVRING THE PIECES INTO PLACE

A large Japanese task force of four heavy aircraft carriers, two light carriers, two seaplane carriers, seven battleships, 15 cruisers, 42 destroyers and ten submarines embark with orders to engage and destroy the American fleet and invade Midway. For the American forces the outlook was mixed. They had successfully intercepted and decoded Japanese communications, so they knew the 'where'. The 'how' might prove more difficult. Admiral Chester Nimitz had no battleships, and only two aircraft carriers were combat ready. The carrier Yorktown was in desperate need of repair, but incredibly after only 72 hours in dry dock, was put to sea to join the fleet.

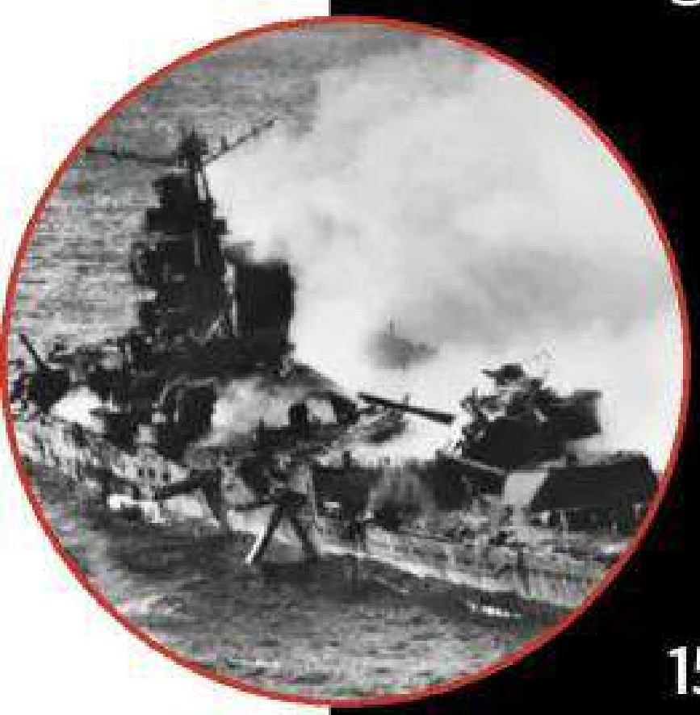
3-4 JUNE 1942

EBB AND FLOW

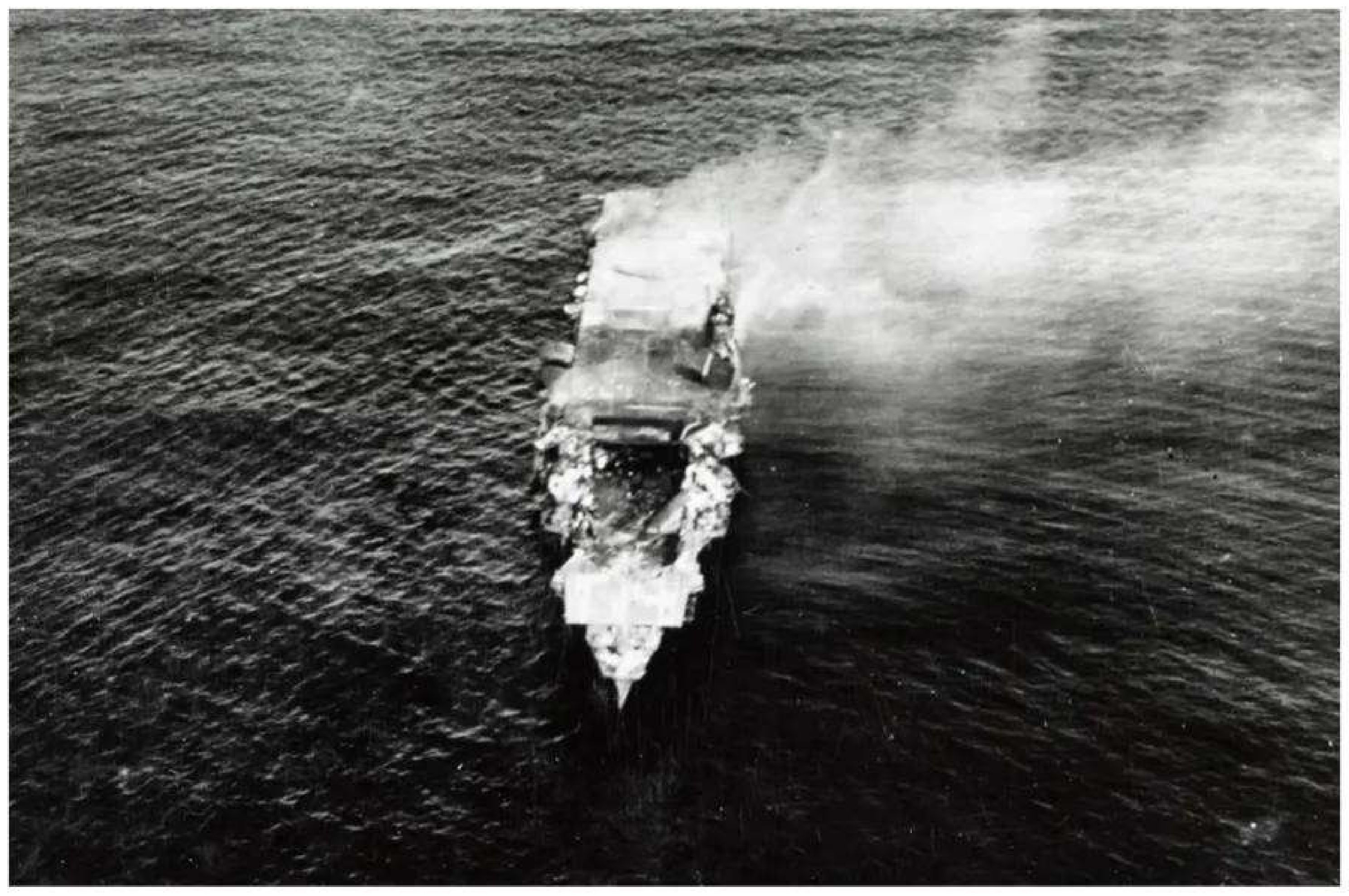
The Japanese task force was closing in on the Midway islands and, having located at least part of the Japanese fleet, B-17 bombers from Midway engaged the enemy, but with little damage. The following day the air battle began, with the American pilots outnumbered roughly 4-1. Midway came under heavy bombardment, except for the runways, which the Japanese planned to use themselves. Planes from Midway were now assaulting the Japanese carrier force. Planes from the Hiryu followed American aircraft back to the Yorktown. A dive-bombing attack left it badly damaged and unable to move. After a second attack it began to list dangerously, and the order was given to abandon ship. A wave of American bombers reduced the Hiryu to a blazing wreck.

5-6 JUNE 1942

COUNTING THE COST



The damaged Akagi and Hiryu are scuttled. A Japanese submarine sinks the salvage vessel accompanying the Yorktown. Some stragglers from the Japanese fleet are located and either damaged or sunk. Japan's losses included four carriers and more than 320 planes. Approximately 3,000 Japanese sailors and airmen were killed. The US victory came at the price of one carrier, a destroyer and nearly 150 aircraft, while 317 airmen, sailors and Marines lost their lives. Midway had brought the opposing naval forces of the US and the Empire of Japan to an even match.



> "Midway had always been intended to destroy the US carriers in the Pacific"

ABOVE
The carrier Hiryu was severely damaged and eventually scuttled

BELOW
The carrier Yorktown had fought courageously but eventually sank

would have absorbed a huge amount of Japanese resources and would have been fraught with risk. Any significant advantage gained from Midway might well have been frittered [away] in a direct assault on Hawaii, and consequently Yamamoto's next move was likely to have been a more vigorous prosecution of the campaign in the South Pacific, in particular the securing of air bases in the Solomon Islands and further operations to capture Port Moresby (in Papua New Guinea), which of course had been the original objective that triggered the Coral Sea battle.

Though such limited objectives might seem cautious, the Midway operation had always been intended primarily to destroy the US carriers in the Pacific in order to secure freedom of action for the Japanese fleet for many months, well into 1943. Yamamoto's objectives during this period would have been to sever the link between the United States and Australia and to create a defensive barrier across the Pacific.

What options would there be for the US in response to defeat?

The US Navy would have been very much on the backfoot following a heavy defeat at Midway, but all was far from lost, even in the short term. Pearl Harbor was still heavily defended and would have proved a difficult nut for Japan to crack, and Nimitz would have had one last throw of the dice with his two remaining carriers, Wasp and Saratoga, which would be ready for action later in the summer of 1942. It would have been imperative for the Americans to keep those carriers available to function as a 'fleet in being' however, rather than risking them in action without very great care. If they were lost, the cupboard would have been bare well into 1943.

Any prospect of contesting Japan's occupation of Guadalcanal in the summer of 1942 or fighting a long campaign in the Solomons in the autumn would have been seriously in doubt if the US carriers had been lost at Midway. Nimitz would have had to sit and wait until 1943, when new carriers and resources became available before he could move on to offensive operations. In essence, defeat at Midway would have reduced US options in the Pacific to a policy of conservation and survival well into the following year.

What would be the possible impact on other theatres of conflict in WWII?

Defeat at Midway would have forced a temporary re-evaluation of the Anglo-American grand strategy of 'Germany First', forged by Roosevelt and Churchill in December 1941. Much to the US Navy's disappointment and despite the deteriorating situation in the Asia-Pacific theatre, the majority of American resources were to be focused on containing and defeating Germany, which was viewed as a greater threat.

Defeat at Midway would have forced a short-term shift of focus to prevent potential total calamity in the Pacific. A diversion of resources from the Atlantic-European front to shore up defences in the Pacific, in particular Hawaii and Pearl Harbor, might well have caused a contraction or indeed a postponement to the planned invasion of Vichy French North Africa in the autumn of 1942, what became Operation Torch.

The Commonwealth position in the Indian Ocean might also have suffered in the aftermath of a defeat at Midway. Japanese carrier naval forces might well have returned later in 1942 to threaten the beleaguered Royal Navy still further and undermine Allied efforts to reinforce both India and China.

How would the US manage the narrative of a defeat at home and to its allies?

There is no doubt that a heavy defeat at Midway would have badly damaged America's standing and reputation abroad and within the Grand Alliance. Serious questions would have been raised about how long it was going to take for the USA to capitalise on its economic and industrial potential and build effective military capability. There would have been some dismay in London and Canberra in particular, as their immediate futures were more directly dependent on emerging American power. Conversely, in Moscow, Stalin would have cared little about Midway, other than it might potentially drain away resources that he was demanding from the West in order to keep up the struggle against Hitler's forces on the Eastern Front.

Yet, a defeat at Midway would have been only one more failure in the Pacific, so not actually that out of the ordinary, nor indeed a shock - the US Navy had been on the retreat since the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941. Morale at home would have remained in the doldrums and questions would certainly have been asked about military and naval leadership, though Admiral King in Washington was unlikely to jettison Nimitz so soon after the post-Pearl Harbor clear out in Hawaii. The government in Washington would have had to work very hard to bolster its reputation and would have pointed to economic mobilisation and output to indicate a more prosperous medium-to-long-term scenario.

ABOVE
The Japanese suffered incredibly high losses of pilots and seamen

Could the overall outcome of the war in the Pacific have been different?

Ultimately victory at Midway would have bought Japan more time to prepare for American counteroffensives - Tokyo would have won the opportunity to strengthen their defences in the Pacific, and potentially isolate Australia still further from the US. But would this have been enough to do anything other than delay the inevitability of American victory in the Pacific campaign? Probably not. The underlying weaknesses of Japan's war effort and long-term deficiencies would have remained. The bulk of Japan's military assets were already deeply committed to China and Southeast Asia and were making little progress there; naval success in the Pacific would not have done much to break this impasse.

If Japan had been better able to exploit its recently captured resources and economic opportunities, greater military and naval capacity might have been developed, but the structure and nature of the regime in Tokyo precluded that. Quite simply the USA was going to outproduce Japan many times over and eventually seize the initiative in the war; defeat at Midway might delay the offensives but no more. It is of course worth noting that by 1945 the USA had the atom bomb, and the USSR was able to intervene in the Asia-Pacific War following the defeat of Germany. Both of these measures would have crippled Japan's ability to wage war; Midway was unlikely to alter that reality.

THE POSSIBILITY

1943

ON THE FRONT FOOT

With a victory at Midway, and the subsequent blow to the US naval capability, Japan would have been able to remain on the offensive in the South Pacific and possibly the Indian Ocean well into 1943. It may have resulted in a further attack on Pearl Harbor, already part of Japan's overall plans. It would also have started a chain of events that would see any return to offensive success by the USA in the Pacific to be painfully slow. Japan, on the other hand, would have been able to gain time to consolidate its forces and become a far more credible adversary to the US.

1943

FIGHTING THE CLOCK

With US naval forces taking time to recover from a Midway defeat, and progress against the Japanese slow, the timing of many events would have been badly skewed. The USA would not have been able to mount the Guadalcanal offensive (Operation Watchtower) until possibly 1943. By which time the Empire of Japan may have already been able to use the airfield and land-based planes to make successful strikes against US bases. And success would have been even harder to achieve had the Japanese forces had more time to create a substantial presence on the islands, which would have been more capable of repelling an amphibious assault.

1944-45

THE WAR GOES ON

By 1944 the US forces had reached the Marianas Islands, an ideal staging point for a possible invasion of Japan if necessary. But it was to be used for the base operations of the B-29 Superfortress fire bombing raids on Tokyo and other Japanese cities, as well as the dropping of the atomic bombs. But the delay in operations caused by a defeat at Midway would not guarantee such smooth planning, and such use of airpower over Japan itself may have come much later in a very much prolonged war.

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What if...

ROMMEL HAD WON IN NORTH AFRICA?

The Nazi commander failed to hold off the Allies, but could an Axis victory have changed the course of World War II?

INTERVIEW WITH

© Ken Delve

Ken Delve

Ken Delve is a military historian and former RAF navigator. He is the author of *Disaster in the Desert*, which explores what could have happened if Rommel had won in North Africa and swept into Egypt.

In 1941, Erwin Rommel (who came to be known as the 'Desert Fox') had been given control of Germany's North Africa Korps. In a short period of time he had managed to achieve a staggering number of victories against the Allies. Despite this, the North African front appeared to be of secondary importance to the German high command compared to the brutal battles occurring on the Eastern Front. A critical supply issue would result in a number of back-and-forth battles and would eventually prove to be Rommel's undoing. However, historian Ken Delve argues that had Rommel achieved victory, and swept into the Middle East, then WWII could have turned out very differently…

What was the situation in North Africa in 1942?

In 1940 there had been the failure of the Allied Crusader Offensive. They entered the north in November 1941 and, despite starting with great promise, by spring 1942 everything had gone badly wrong and had developed into a back-and-forth, which was symptomatic of the desert war. If during an offensive you out-reached your supply lines you were under threat because the enemy is then able to get enough supplies [of their own]. The enemy then goes on the offensive and you have to roll back hundreds of miles. Rommel's offensive started very well and was able to hold the line and resupply, forcing the Allies back into Egypt. By summer 1942 there was a distinct threat that the Germans and Italians would take Egypt.

How close at this point was Rommel to victory?

It's an interesting one, because you never quite know if the Allied commanders were as bad as some people make them out to be. There were some phenomenally good Allied ground troops. The vast majority of squadrons deployed in the war [in North Africa] were not actually British troops but were colonial groups. And although Rommel did look quite close he was so over-stretched that the chances of him actually succeeding in getting through to take Cairo and the Suez Canal were pretty slim because of the integration of his supply lines.

Ultimately, what caused Rommel's defeat in North Africa?

What really caused the defeat of Rommel was a lack of supply, because he was relying on bringing everything across the Mediterranean. If you could interrupt those supply lines, he would have no tanks, no men and no fuel. So the failure to bring supplies, especially fuel, was really the death knell of Rommel's campaign and that was largely down to air [power]. 39th Squadron played a large part in that, and was known as the 'Ship Busters'. Rommel needed to neutralise this from North Africa, but especially from Malta, and the key failure was Rommel not neutralising Malta. From the Allies' point of view, when a new tanker was sailing every effort was made to sink it and as a result every single oil tanker was sunk.

RIGHT
German armoured forces in the desert of North Africa

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Main image source: © Alamy, © Getty Images

THE PAST

1891

BECOMING THE DESERT FOX

Erwin Rommel was born on 15 November 1891. He joined the military in 1910 and fought in WWI. When WWII began he was placed in charge of the troops who protected Hitler. In February 1940, Rommel took command of the 7th Armoured Panzer Division and proved his abilities with a victory on France's Channel Coast. He was nicknamed the Desert Fox after his initial successes commanding the Africa Korps in the North African desert.

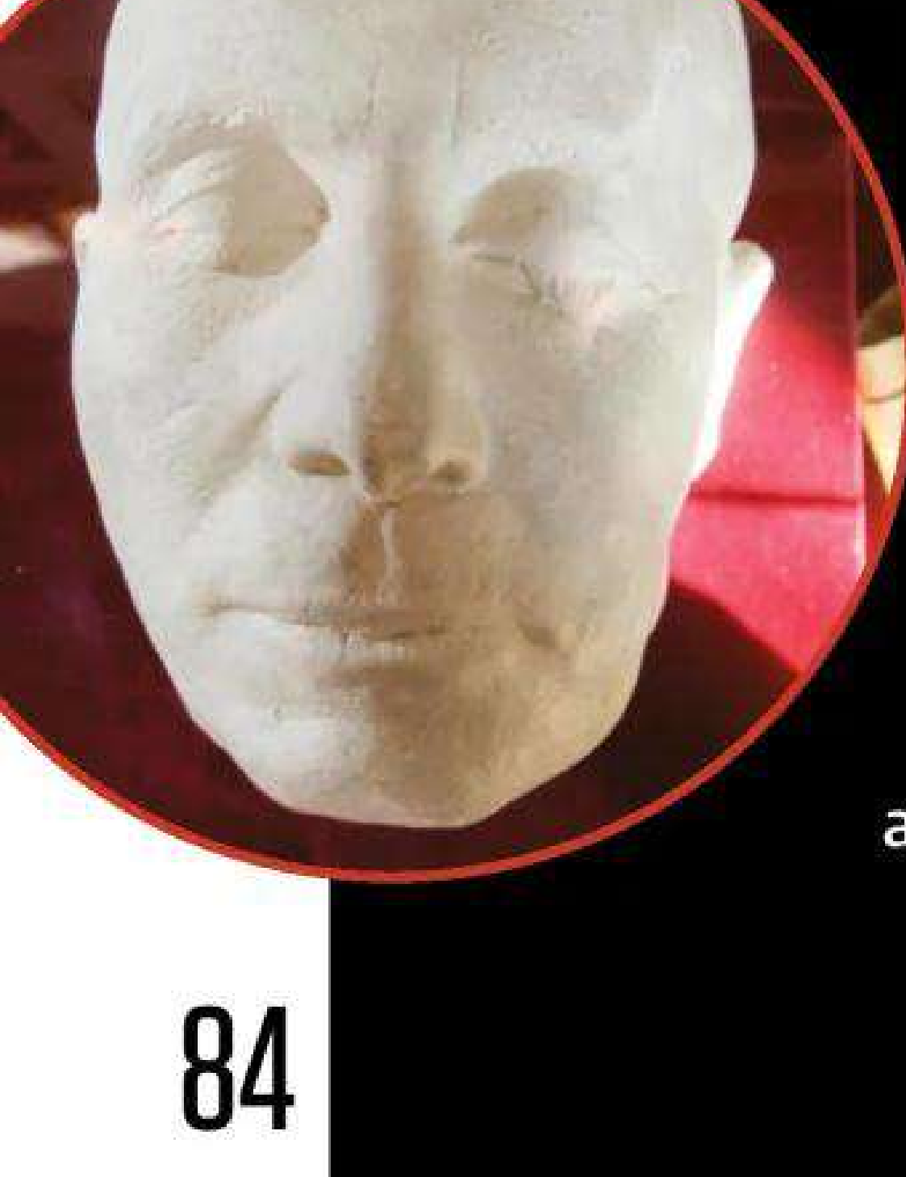
MAY – JUNE 1941

THE BATTLE OF CRETE

Germany mounted an ambitious airborne and amphibious assault on the strategically vital island. The operation was a disaster for the British but also resulted in over 3,000 German fatalities. Despite the Nazis' success on Crete the casualty rate may have resulted in Hitler's reluctance to press ahead with an invasion of Malta.

OCTOBER 1944

THE DEATH OF ROMMEL



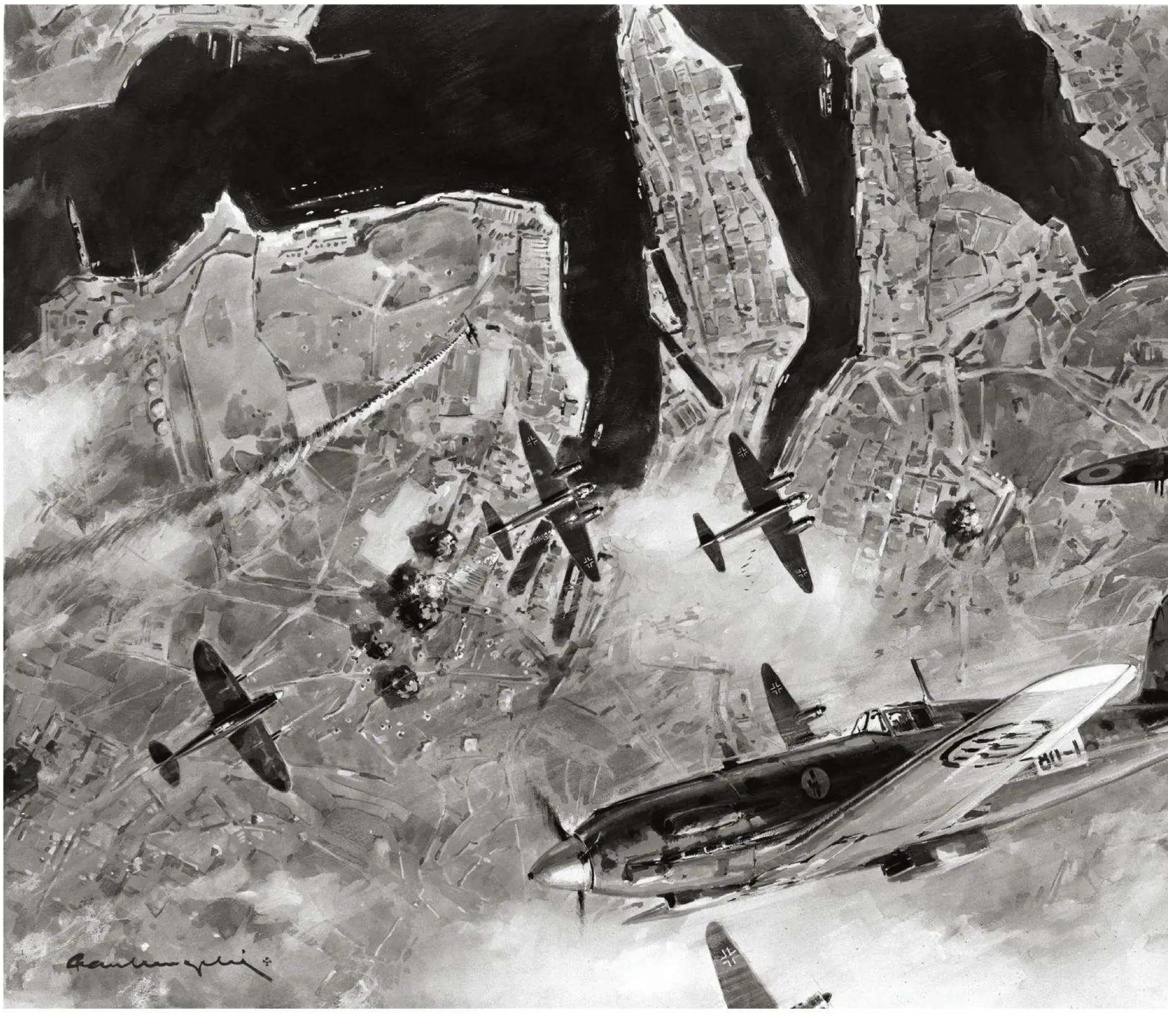
Following defeat in North Africa, Rommel was moved to Northern France in order to defend against a possible Allied invasion. Here the commander began to lose faith in both Hitler and the direction of the war, and he doubted Germany's chances of victory. Rommel was approached by a group of conspirators who discussed the possibility of a new German government, led by him. However, the conspirators failed to reveal to him that they planned to remove Hitler from power through assassination. When Hitler discovered Rommel's links to the failed 1944 July Plot to kill him Rommel was offered a choice: trial or suicide. He chose the latter and took cyanide capsules.

How close was a possible Axis victory in North Africa?

Primarily they would have to have taken Malta. If Malta had fallen then it would have been easier for the Axis forces to move their fuel, their munitions and everything else across. The Italians often got a bad press, but they worked hard supplying ships and personnel to try to drive the supplies across. It's just that the Allies were very good at disrupting them. There were plans for an assault on Malta, but for whatever reason the decision was taken by the Axis forces not to push forward. It is possible that the invasion of Crete [in May 1941] had had an impact. Also, the Axis forces were having to move air power from theatre to theatre. So when the Axis powers made an impact in North Africa they achieved this by taking air power out of Russia and removing it when it was needed for the Eastern Front. In terms of air power, the Axis from 1940 onwards was robbing Peter to pay Paul.

If Operation Torch (the Anglo-US invasion of northwest Africa) had failed, what would've been the impact?

It's an interesting one. When you look at alternate history, you say: "Yes, it would have an impact because you've now got the Germans having to fight on two fronts." They did remarkably well for a while but [Bernard] Montgomery's offensive in El Alamein pushed Rommel back far enough to be able to counter the attack in North Africa. Montgomery was an incredibly slow mover and incredibly cautious, which allowed Rommel to play with two fronts for a while. However, there is an argument that says the Allies would probably still have won anyway. That's because all of the airfields captured on the North African side where Operation Torch was involved didn't make a lot of difference anyway. However, because of Torch the Germans moved a lot of different forces into North Africa. The main impact of Torch was that it was a blooding for the Americans and a blooding for the combined command structure. A lot of the failings of politics, personalities and tactics were hammered out in North Africa and made the D-Day assault more effective. When you look at the command structure for D-Day, it was



ABOVE
A German soldier surrenders during the Battle of El Alamein

ABOVE-INSET
Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, who led the Allies to victory in North Africa

LEFT
German bombers attack the port of Valletta, Malta. The island was used by the Allies to launch attacks against Nazi supply ships

the command structure from North Africa. So the likes of Dwight D Eisenhower, Montgomery, they all moved across having learned lessons in North Africa.

What would have been the immediate aftermath of a victory in North Africa for Rommel?

If Rommel had taken Malta and received the supplies he needed and driven into Egypt, Torch would not have happened. If the Suez Canal had fallen, Rommel could have swung up through the oil fields in Iraq and essentially the Allies would've lost their major source of oil. Of course, this would've meant the Germans getting a bigger supply of oil. If the Germans had taken those Iraqi oil fields, they could've moved into Iran and into the soft underbelly of Russia where they could've joined up with Axis forces and provided them with oil as well. One of the primary downfalls of the German forces was lack of oil. Germany did an amazingly good job with creating synthetic oil products but it's not the same. The intensity of attacks on oil targets in Europe were such that their production rates were minimal. If they had been able to capture oil facilities in the Middle East, and then in the Russian areas as well, for example Romania, it would have made a huge difference. The Allied collapse in North Africa would have led to the collapse of the whole of that area. The Allies would not have been able to hold that area.

Could that then have altered the course of the war?

Definitely. Oil is such an important aspect of it because the Axis forces could have then joined their Middle East forces with their forces in Russia and that could have seen the Russians collapse. With North Africa having been lost the Allies would have found it very hard to get it back. If they'd lost Egypt and the Suez Canal the question is would the Allies still have gone ahead with an attack in North Africa to try to divide the Axis forces? Would they have tried to assault Egypt from basically their bases in India and Africa? The loss of the Middle East would have been a massive loss of British prestige. Winston Churchill pointed out that one reason the Allies fought pretty hard not to lose the Middle East was because if certain countries saw we were not able to protect it, those countries could've possibly changed sides or not supported the Allies.

Is it fair to suggest that if Rommel had won in North Africa, the Germans could have won WWII?

I think so. I mean, you have to talk about how strategic bombing played a part. And remember – the Allies having won in North Africa as well as the invasion of Italy meant they could now attack southern Germany and Austria from air bases around Bosnia and Italy. Their strategic bombing campaign was now increased against Germany itself. If the Axis had held all of that, the Italians would not have left the Axis side and integral strategic bombing would have been minimised. We may have even seen the Americans say: "That's all too little too late and let's not bother." That's why I think Churchill was right to dig in his heels with the Americans. The Americans did not want a Mediterranean campaign. They wanted the Allies to focus all their attention on going into Europe, but that was wrong. So I think the Allies eventually winning in the Middle East was crucial to the Allies winning the war, and therefore the converse is also true.

THE POSSIBILITY

1941

THE IMPORTANCE OF OIL

Rashid Gaylani took control of the kingdom of Iraq in 1941 with assistance from both Germany and Italy. Due to Allied concerns that the country's crucial oil fields might be about to fall into the hands of the Axis powers, Britain waged a 30-day war and toppled his regime. This nonetheless highlighted the importance of oil. Had Rommel been able to push into Iraq and seize its oil fields, the outcome of WWII may have been very different.

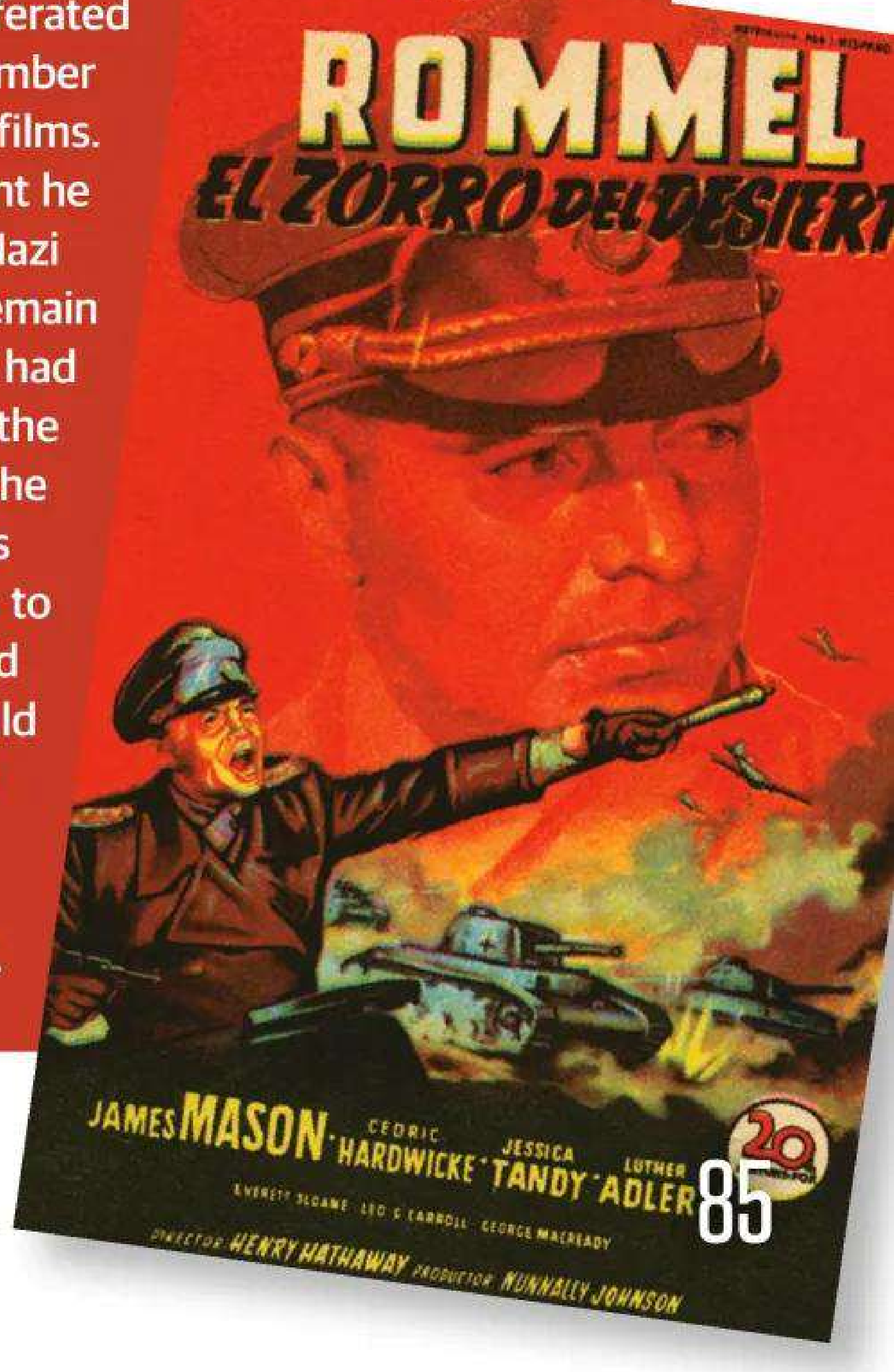
1942

OPERATION HERKULES

Herkules was a planned operation for the capture of the islands of Malta and Gozo to secure Axis supply lines to North Africa. But Nazi casualties sustained during the Battle of Crete led Hitler to cancel this plan in November 1942. The manpower was instead sent to North Africa to assist Rommel's forces at his request. However, had the islands been captured it is possible that Rommel may have had the supplies necessary to defeat the Allies in North Africa and change the course of the war.

1945 ONWARDS

ROMMEL MYTH



The Rommel Myth is the idea that he was a noble leader and military genius who was uncommitted to Nazi ideology. The idea has been proliferated through a number of books and films. To what extent he believed in Nazi ideology will remain unknown, but had the course of the war differed the question has to be raised as to whether Allied politicians would have viewed him as the supposedly 'good German'.

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What if...

STALINGRAD HAD FALLEN TO THE NAZIS?

How might a Nazi victory have broken Russian courage and changed the war on the Eastern Front?

INTERVIEW WITH

© D Stone

Dr David R Stone

David teaches in the Strategy and Policy Department of the US Naval War College. He received his PhD in Russian history from Yale University and is the author of numerous books and dozens of articles on Russian and Soviet military history. His most recent book is titled *The Russian Army in the Great War: The Eastern Front, 1914-1917.*

• These views are David's own and not any official position of the US government.

It is a battle still celebrated today in modern Russia as the very heart and soul of their courage and fortitude against an invading army. On the surface, the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact of 1939 between Hitler and Stalin gave each what they wanted. But Hitler wanted more. Extra land for the German people and the annihilation of the Slavs were central to his plan. All went well, until Stalingrad stood firmly in his way. The city's refusal to break came at a terrible cost in lives. But if the Nazis had managed to defeat the Soviet forces and taken the city, how might the Eastern Front, and the rest of the war, have been different?

Would the Nazis have continued their expansion eastwards and what may this have looked like?

I don't think that's likely. When the Germans got to Stalingrad in late summer 1942 and began the months-long struggle for the city, the German military was already stretched to breaking point. Keep in mind – the battle for Stalingrad was only part of a much bigger campaign. In spring and summer 1942, Hitler had sent his Wehrmacht on an offensive through eastern Ukraine and southern Russia, aiming at the Caucasus. The goal was oil: some in Chechnya but far more around Baku, in present-day Azerbaijan. Hitler's empire in Europe had very few sources of oil – basically limited to some from Romania. That wasn't nearly enough to wage the global war that Hitler was now caught up in. The oil resources of Baku were enormous. Hitler's hope was to make it to the shores of the Caspian Sea and use that oil to fuel his war.

Stalingrad ended up part of this campaign because it lay on the left flank of the German move towards the Caucasus. The Germans couldn't afford to leave Stalingrad in Soviet hands – it was a potential base of operations for the Soviets to cut off the German drive for oil. The propaganda benefit of taking the city named for Joseph Stalin was a nice bonus. But the distances involved were enormous. The German jumping-off point in spring 1942, already deep inside the Soviet Union, was 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) from Baku, and there wasn't much of a transportation network in between for the Germans to commandeer. And, of course, the Soviets made sure to wreck anything of value. As it was, the Germans had to stretch their resources very thin to make the push for Baku. While they managed to get awfully close, the eventual Soviet victory at Stalingrad forced them to withdraw in early 1943.

If the Germans HAD won at Stalingrad, it MIGHT have solved some of their resource problems. But even if that had happened, German manpower and logistics couldn't have sustained much beyond what they were trying to do in 1942. Even by late 1941, well before Stalingrad started, the German military

Main image source: © Alamy

RIGHT
Hitler's instructions were to win Stalingrad at any cost

THE PAST

22 JUNE 1941

RENEGING ON THE DEAL

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Having used the non-aggression pact with the USSR to his own advantage, Hitler was now ready to turn the tides and push eastwards. The beginning of Operation Barbarossa saw a rapid and deadly assault from land and air deep into Soviet territory. Despite greater numbers of men and equipment, the Soviets were quickly overwhelmed and encircled, leading to the surrender of hundreds of thousands. By December 1941, despite being on the outskirts of Moscow, Barbarossa had stalled, and the Russian winter began to take its toll on the German forces.

17 JULY 1942

THE SLAUGHTER BEGINS

The assault on Stalingrad was to see some of the most ferocious, brutal, and bloody close-hand combat of the entire war. Fighting street by street, within a month the Soviet general, Vasily Chuikov, and his men were pushed into a strip along the Volga River. Stalin had refused to allow civilians to be evacuated, telling the city's defenders, "not one step back", in the belief that having their fellow Russians so closely in harm's way would prove to be the greatest motivation the Soviet troops could have. It was a huge price to pay in Soviet lives.

NOV 1942 – FEB 1943

THE TIDE TURNS

The Soviet counteroffensive aimed to turn the German's own tactics back on themselves. Instead of striking back at the Nazi forces head-on, General Georgy Zhukov sent his troops around the flanks, overwhelming Romanian forces and encircling the German lines. Now trapped, an attempt was made to breach the Soviet lines by Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, but was unsuccessful. The encircled commander of the Sixth Army, General Friedrich Paulus, creates a plan – Operation Thunderclap – but this was vetoed by Hitler, who wanted Stalingrad defended to the last. It is clear Paulus did not agree, allegedly telling his generals; "I will not shoot myself for this Bohemian Corporal", and he surrendered his forces. It has been estimated that across both sides in the Battle of Stalingrad, there were up to two million deaths and casualties.

> " The biggest effect if the Soviets lost at Stalingrad would likely have been economic loss of access to oil "

was worrying about finding enough able-bodied men. And keep in mind – there wasn't a simple way to get oil from the Caspian Sea back to Germany for fuelling the fight against the Western allies.

What would a Nazi win at Stalingrad have meant for the Russian war effort, its people, and the challenges facing the Russian leadership?
Just the fight for Stalingrad was bad enough. The city was a major industrial centre, not least for Soviet tank production. As the Germans approached Stalingrad at the end of August 1942, Hitler's Luftwaffe carried out major bombing raids that devastated the city. Once the battle for the city itself started, it got much worse. The city, with all its factories, was essentially levelled.

Perhaps an even more important issue was what the Battle of Stalingrad meant for Soviet transportation and fuel. Stalingrad sits along the western bank of the Volga River, and the Volga was – and still is – a major transportation artery. In particular, the Soviet Union in WWII didn't have much of a pipeline network, so the vast majority of the oil produced in Baku got to the rest of the Soviet Union by ship – across the Caspian Sea and then up the Volga.

Starting in summer 1942, German bombers were already dropping mines in the Volga and sinking river traffic. When the Germans reached the banks of the Volga itself, traffic was completely halted. Oil started to back up in Baku as well as on the tankers in Astrakhan. The Soviets had to turn to an alternate and much less efficient route. Oil now had to go to Guryev (now Atyrau in Kazakhstan), up the Ural River, and then by rail to the rest of the Soviet Union. The Volga was closed from summer 1942 through to April 1943, and that was even with the Soviet victory.

If the Germans had won at Stalingrad, the Volga would have been closed longer, perhaps permanently. In the best case for the Soviets, they'd be stuck for a longer time with a much less efficient delivery of oil to fuel their war. In the worst case for the Soviets, German victory at Stalingrad would have allowed them to make it all the way to Baku, and the Soviets would have lost that oil entirely. That would have put the Soviet leadership in an even tougher position and might have made them rethink whether to seek a separate peace.

Could the Germans have maintained resources for two active fronts?
By this point, Germany was already badly stretched. Winning at Stalingrad, though, would actually have eased Germany's problems a bit. Taking Stalingrad would let the Germans put part of the front line on the Volga River, which would have made for a more defensible position. Taking Stalingrad would also have made it more likely that Hitler would have been able to reach the oil fields of Baku on the Caspian Sea, which would have solved one of his resource problems.

What impact would such a victory have on morale of the German people and how might the Nazi propaganda machine have benefitted from it?
No doubt Joseph Goebbels' propaganda machine would have made a great deal out of the capture of Stalingrad – the city of Stalin. But morale was not a problem for Hitler's regime. There was no significant internal resistance at this point. That only came later, when the war was clearly lost. And German soldiers fought even harder when the war turned against Germany. There was a pretty good sense among German soldiers and civilians of what Soviet victory and Soviet occupation would mean for Germans, after all the horrific crimes they had committed against the Soviet people.

The real question was how Hitler was going to compensate for the enormous material and manpower advantages of the Allies, not whether he could get his people to actually fight.

© Alamy

How might the Western Allies have viewed such a victory by the Nazis and what action would they need to have taken?
It certainly would have been a major morale blow, which would partially offset the Allied successes at El Alamein and the Torch landings in North Africa. But it's hard to see much changing in terms of what the Western Allies were doing - they were already shipping raw materials and munitions to the Soviet Union. It would have shifted the route: the Persian Corridor through Iran would have been forced to detour by the Nazi capture of Stalingrad, so more aid would have had to come through other routes.

Could a German victory at Stalingrad have changed the timing of the war, and even the outcome?
Certainly, winning at Stalingrad would have staved off German defeat for a time. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad not only destroyed the entire German Sixth Army, but it was followed by an offensive that liberated huge amounts of Soviet territory (and a young Mikhail Gorbachev, who lived for a time under German occupation) and forced the Germans to rapidly evacuate their troops pushing towards Baku. It gave renewed conviction to the Soviets and to the Western Allies that the Germans could indeed be beaten.

The question of changing the outcome of the war is much tougher. One of the aspects of the history of the war that is still quite mysterious is the extent of Nazi-Soviet discussions of a potential peace deal. There's reasonably good evidence that Stalin made some kind of approach to Hitler about a separate peace, though we know almost nothing about the details. If the Soviets had been defeated at Stalingrad, and if Soviet victory seemed distant or even impossible, then Stalin might have been willing to offer Hitler substantial concessions in terms of territory or resources in order to get out of the war. That would have allowed Hitler to focus exclusively on the Western Front. While this almost certainly wouldn't have been enough to enable him to defeat the United States and the United Kingdom, it might have been enough to drag the war out even longer and force the Western Allies to accept a peace of exhaustion, leaving Hitler in power in Germany with at least some of Germany's conquests. After all, Stalingrad took place a full year and a half before the Western Allies went ashore in Normandy - imagine what D-Day would have looked like with the bulk of the German military waiting in Western Europe. US Army Chief of Staff George Marshall said that he expected the American people would be willing to fight for four years before they would get tired of the war. As it was, the US only had to fight for three and a half.

ABOVE
Many of the prisoners of war would not survive their captivity

THE POSSIBILITY

1942

NON-AGGRESSION PART 2

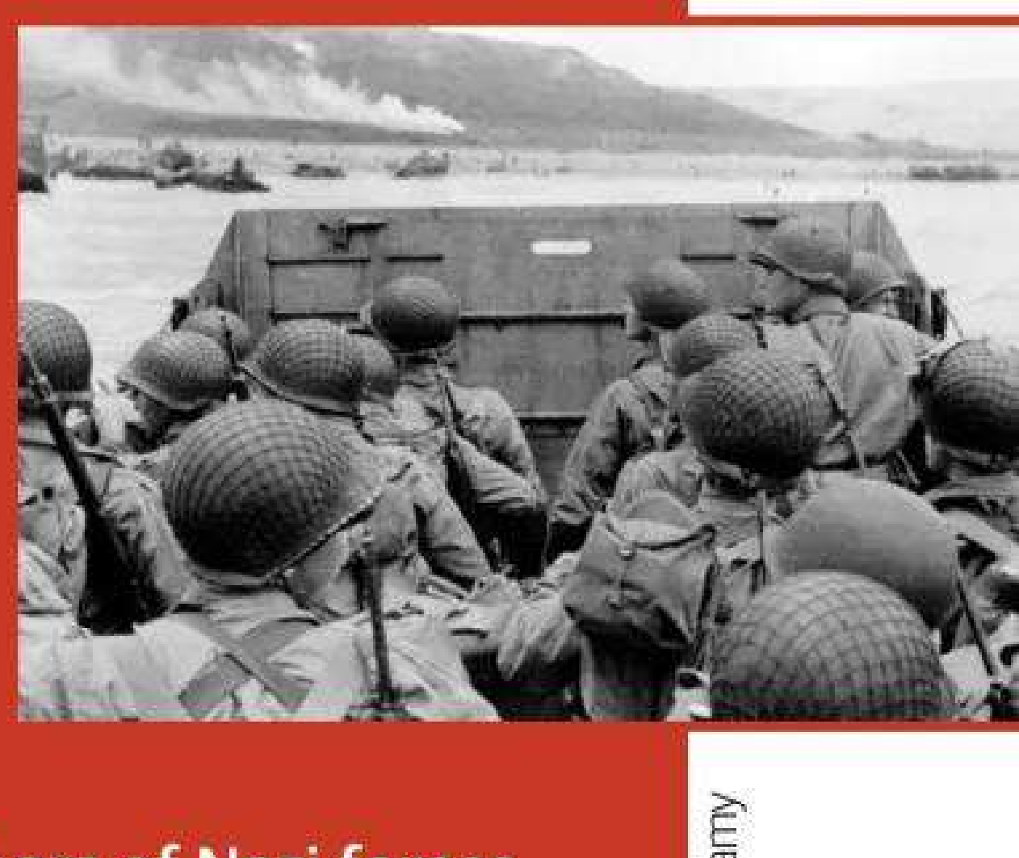
It is possible Stalin may have looked to turn defeat into a victory of his own. Vital Nazi resources were being exhausted on the Eastern Front, but if that problem were to go away, by Stalin offering a peace deal and cessation of combat, those resources could be used more effectively in the West against the Allies. Hitler could possibly get the land he wanted for his Lebensraum (living space) for the German people, which had been at the heart of Operation Barbarossa. And Stalin would have the breathing space to rebuild the Soviet economy and armed forces in peace, ready for any possible future conflict with the West.

JUNE 1944

D FOR DISASTER DAY

Without the distraction and drain of conflict in the East, Nazi forces would have ample opportunity to strengthen, reinforce, and regroup in the West. With such a change in strength of Nazi defences, the timing and execution of the Allied invasion of Europe may have come under close scrutiny. It may be that more than one direct route back onto the Continent would be required, perhaps from the south, in order to gain a foothold.

Potentially, larger numbers of Nazi forces would have made a beach invasion more of a gamble. And even once a foothold had been created, the sheer scale of Nazi defences could have drastically slowed, or stalled, the advance across Europe towards Berlin, leading to a possible stalemate.



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1945 ONWARDS

THE FOURTH REICH

With a greater depth of force between him and the invading Allies, Hitler's options may have been very different. Allied war fatigue and slow progress, plus a quiet and unpredictable Soviet Union, may have played into Hitler's hands to broker a form of peace. Germany remains intact, with him as leader and buffer between capitalist West and Communist East. So, no race to Berlin between the Soviets and the West; no East and West Berlin, no East Germany; and a very different look to the plans for a closer post-war European union.

What if...

RUSSIA SIGNED A SECOND PACT WITH GERMANY?

With casualties mounting and citizens starving, what effect would Stalin striking another deal with Hitler have had?

INTERVIEW WITH

© Monika Lutostanski

Dr Aleksandra Pomiecko

Aleksandra is a lecturer in modern Russian history at King's College London. Her research centres on histories of war and conflict in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet space, primarily in the 20th century. She has published in various journals, including *Slavic Review*, *The Journal of Historical Sociology*, and *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. She is currently working on a book that traces the history of Belarusian armed groups in the 20th century.

With their first non-aggression pact in August 1939, both Hitler and Stalin were out to get as much as they could from the other. Learning lessons from World War I, Hitler was determined, at least for now, not to have to split his forces between Eastern and Western fronts. The pact also neutralised Russia in coming to the aid of Poland should Hitler invade. Dividing territories in Poland and the Baltic between them sealed the deal. But, not surprisingly, Hitler was to later renege on his word and invade Russia. Faced with cities under siege and forces depleted, would a second pact have been the answer for Stalin and the Russian people?

At what stage would it have been in the Soviet interest for such a pact?
Though the Soviet Union did not sign a second non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany following the latter's disastrous invasion of Operation Barbarossa in June of 1941, the Allied powers worried Soviet authorities would consider doing so. The turning point of the war on the Eastern Front came with the Battle of Stalingrad, which took place from August 1942 to February the following year. This period also marked a critical situation in Leningrad, which was enduring an extreme siege attempting to starve the city's population and force its capitulation. Other areas across the Eastern Front were suffering tremendous losses as well. Ultimately, however, Soviet victory and Nazi Germany's failure to capture Stalingrad, and therefore access to oil and energy sources, in the spring of 1943 marked the beginning of the end. During this critical period of the war, the United States was still only promising to open the front in the West to alleviate Soviet losses and casualties; it would only actually do so in June 1944. Had the Soviet Union decided to sign a second non-aggression pact, it may have been during the peak of the Battle of Stalingrad, when its military personnel and civilians suffered serious losses and support from the West was not as tangible as they were promising.

What kind of deal would Stalin look for and what would he do next?
During World War I, the new Bolshevik regime signed an early peace with Germany, ending the war on the eastern frontier much to the dismay of the United Kingdom and France. However, the German and Soviet states of World War II were vastly different than those that had signed an early peace in Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. The Bolsheviks who signed an early peace with Germany in 1918 made this decision based on domestic instability and civil war. They accepted the conditions put forth by Germany to appease masses of people who called for peace, and to focus their attention on their enemies that were challenging their authority. During World War II, Soviet authorities operated under different conditions that perhaps presented less severe political obstacles domestically, but certainly faced a more ruthless and ideologically radical enemy. Soviet authorities would possibly have looked into ceding as little territory as possible to Nazi Germany. They would

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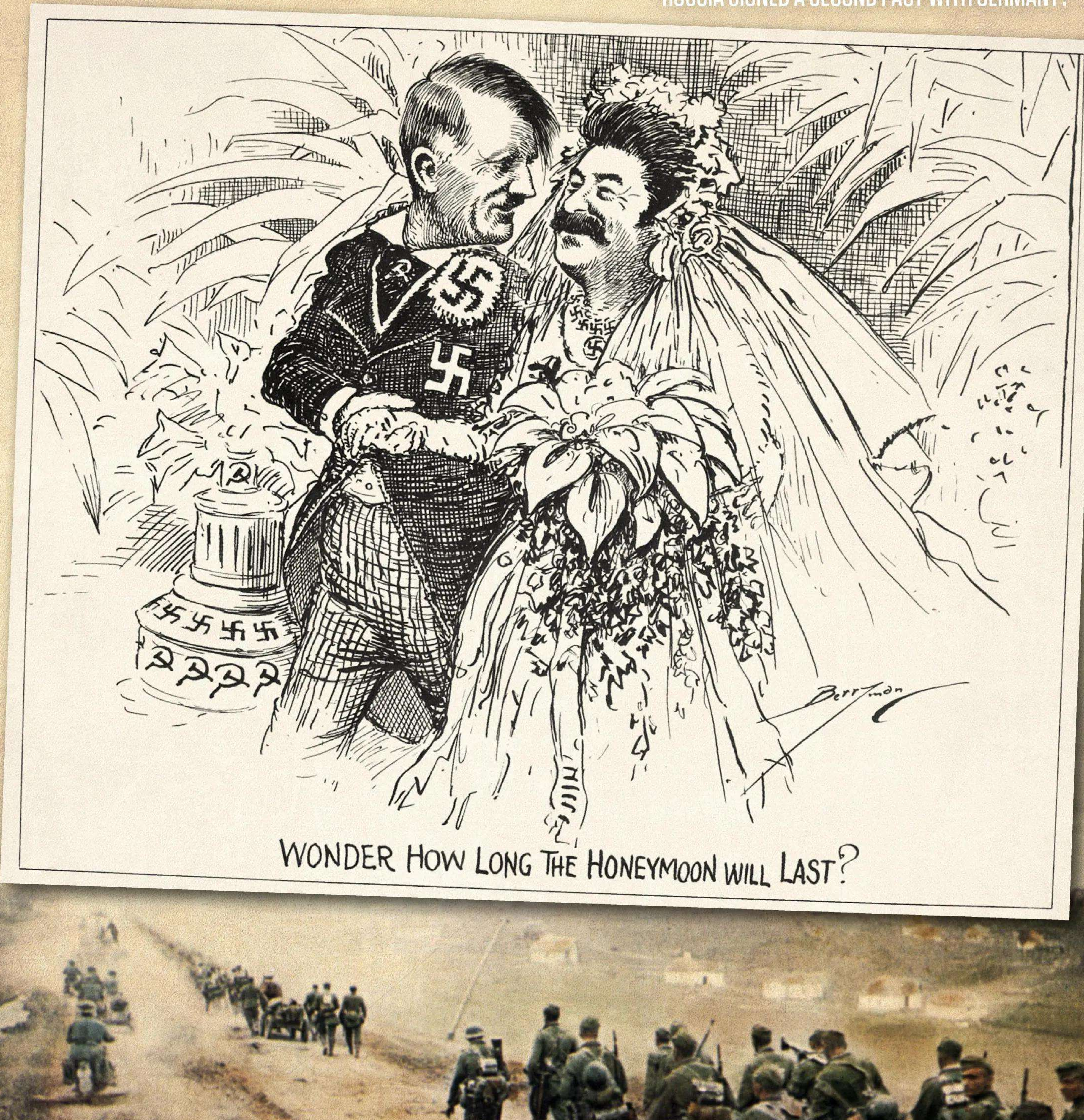
RIGHT
German speakers were repatriated into annexed territory


WONDER HOW LONG THE HONEYMOON WILL LAST?
Berryman

THE PAST

AUGUST 1939

STAYING ON THE SIDELINES

The meeting of German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and his Soviet counterpart, Vyacheslav Molotov, would result in two agreements. Firstly, economic, in which the Soviets would supply food and raw materials to Germany, thereby bypassing the British blockade of sea ports at the start of the war. In return, Russia would receive German machinery. The second agreement – the non-aggression pact – would have significant influence on how Hitler implemented his plans. With Russia agreeing to stay out of the conflict, the Nazi war machine could throw everything at the West. The Soviets would gain more territory in Poland and the Baltic states in recognition of their compliance. The agreement was for ten years. It lasted two.

JUNE 1941

BETRAYAL

Agreements for Hitler were only ever a matter of convenience, and in June 1941 he launched his invasion of the Soviet Union. Stalin responds in July by dissolving the non-aggression pact and declaring war on Germany. Later the same month the Anglo-Soviet mutual assistance pact is signed, in effect bringing the Soviet Union into an alliance with Britain and France. By his own actions Hitler had a two-front war but was sure he had picked the right moment. With the same incredible speed in which the West had been overwhelmed, the Nazis were soon deep into Russia, capturing thousands of Soviet troops and laying siege to cities. Now the Soviets would either bend or break.

1942-43

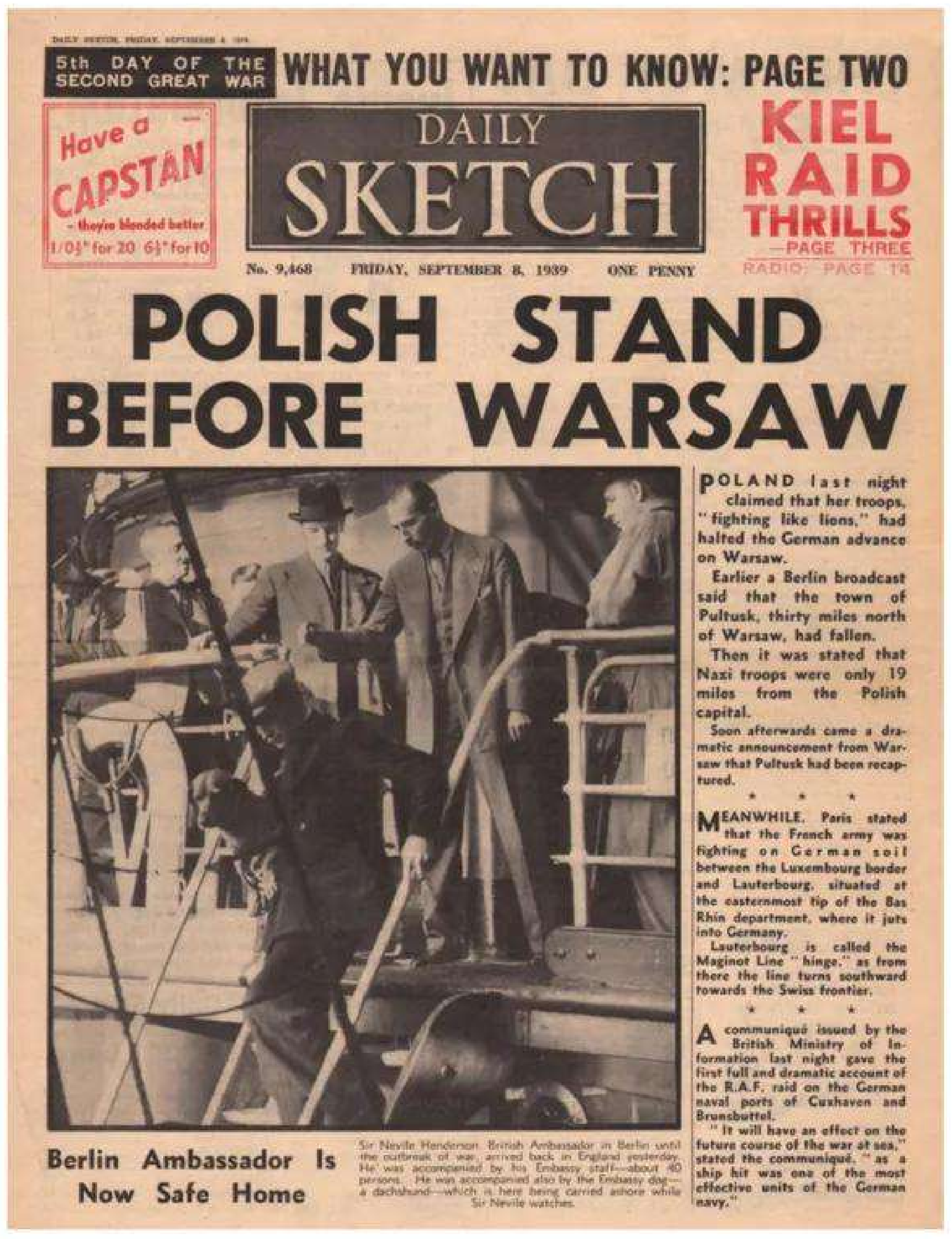
RESISTANCE

The Battle of Stalingrad was the pivotal point that was to prove the German forces were far from invincible. Stalin had taken a huge gamble not evacuating civilians from the city, to give more steel and purpose to the resistance of his troops. The street fighting was some of the most horrific and bloody of the entire war. Hitler demanded his troops take the city, but with stealth and strategic skill it was the Soviets who managed to encircle the Nazi forces and squeeze them into submission. With the Germans on the back foot on the Eastern Front and Allied support filtering through the Baltic, Russia was able to regroup and strengthen its resolve to drive the Nazis from its territory.

ABOVE
Much like the first, a second pact would be little cause for Russia to celebrate

have pushed to cease fighting and hostilities. They would have likely toned down promises to the West regarding engaging in a war against Japan – something Stalin tentatively agreed to do at the Tehran Conference in late 1943. Despite what Stalin or the other members of the Politburo and Central Committee would have hoped for in a hypothetical deal with Nazi Germany, the latter's aims hinged on procuring land, or 'living space' as ideologues referred to, in addition to oil supply in the Caucasus and forced labourers. Depending on when a non-aggression pact would have been signed, due to the nature of German intervention and invasion, the terms of a non-aggression treaty wouldn't have been skewed favourably toward the Soviet Union.

What might have been the Allied response politically?
There would likely have been strong condemnation of this decision. But in the long run, it is the post-war period that would have seen the most impactful effects of the Allied response. Had a treaty of non-aggression been signed, it is very possible that the Allies would not have allotted Stalin a seat at the table with his British and American counterparts at some of the most important conferences that dictated the political order in Europe after the war: Yalta and Potsdam, a few months apart. The weight that the Soviet Union – and also Stalin himself – carried in these two conferences was monumental. The Soviet Union, as the bearer and target of so much destruction, damage, and casualties, carried a significant voice in the post-war plans mapped out between the three leaders. Also significant was the fact that the only consistent attendee at both Yalta and Potsdam was Stalin, as his British and American counterparts were different in Yalta and in Potsdam. Franklin D Roosevelt, present at Yalta but who died two months later, was succeeded by Harry S Truman at Potsdam. Winston Churchill who was with Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta, was abruptly replaced by Clement Attlee early in the conference after elections in the UK were held that chose a new prime minister. Had the Soviet Union signed a treaty of non-aggression, it is possible that Stalin's representation at these important conferences would have been limited, if not non-existent, and that the impact the USSR would have played in the domination of the continent for the next 50 years would have been drastically different.



5th DAY OF THE SECOND GREAT WAR

WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW: PAGE TWO

Have a CAPSTAN – they're blended better 1/0½" for 20 6½" for 10

DAILY SKETCH

KIEL RAID THRILLS —PAGE THREE

RADIO: PAGE 14

No. 9,468 FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1939 ONE PENNY

POLISH STAND BEFORE WARSAW

POLAND last night claimed that her troops, "fighting like lions," had halted the German advance on Warsaw.

Earlier a Berlin broadcast said that the town of Pultusk, thirty miles north of Warsaw, had fallen.

Then it was stated that Nazi troops were only 19 miles from the Polish capital.

Soon afterwards came a dramatic announcement from Warsaw that Pultusk had been recaptured.

* * *

MEANWHILE, Paris stated that the French army was fighting on German soil between the Luxembourg border and Lauterbourg, situated at the easternmost tip of the Bas Rhin department, where it juts into Germany.

Lauterbourg is called the Maginot Line "hinge," as from there the line turns southward towards the Swiss frontier.

* * *

A communiqué issued by the British Ministry of Information last night gave the first full and dramatic account of the R.A.F. raid on the German naval ports of Cuxhaven and Brunsbuttel.

"It will have an effect on the future course of the war at sea," stated the communiqué, "as a ship hit was one of the most effective units of the German navy."

Berlin Ambassador Is Now Safe Home

Sir Nevile Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin until the outbreak of war, arrived back in England yesterday. He was accompanied by his Embassy staff—about 40 persons. He was accompanied also by the Embassy dog—a dachshund—which is here being carried ashore while Sir Nevile watches.

BELOW
The division of Poland by the pact would trigger war

What would the impact have been on the Western Front and Hitler's strategy for the war?
A non-aggression treaty would have significantly decreased Germany's overextended manpower and resources across the European continent. An agreement with the USSR would have allowed Nazi Germany to shift some of its troops and fighting potential to other fronts, including Western Europe but also North Africa and potentially into the Middle East. This shift would have been particularly impactful, as vast parts of the western regions of the Soviet Union were under direct military control, entailing the collaboration and resources of the German Army, or Wehrmacht, as well as numerous armed units and police battalions. Moreover, with the potential access to further oil and energy sources in the Caucasus, Nazi Germany's reliance on synthetic oil would have been less

crucial. With a more consistent way of procuring oil and energy, its fighting capabilities would have remained energised. Additionally, Hitler relied heavily on the use of forced labourers from Eastern Europe to work in various industrial and agricultural capabilities that continued to sustain the Third Reich. This forced labour system would have likely expanded even more with an agreement, contributing to Hitler's vision of completely extracting both human and natural resources from the region. A non-aggression agreement with the USSR may have also enticed or forced other states to support, if not engage more openly with, Nazi Germany. These connections would have secured Nazi Germany's position on the continent.

How might Allied plans and tactics have had to change?

A second non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany would have been absolutely devastating for the Allies and their war plans. The Allies would certainly face more intense challenges on various fronts. It is possible that a US invasion may have taken place much sooner than June 1944. It is also possible that the Allies would have had to rely significantly more on underground resistance movements and partisan units, especially in Eastern Europe, to foment any fighting against Nazi Germany. Indeed, anti-German partisan activity and resistance was rampant in Eastern Europe, primarily in what is today's Belarus. During the beginning of Nazi Germany's invasion, much of these partisans operated independently of official Soviet authorities, who were initially reluctant to support such fighters. Later in 1942, Soviet authorities did recognise the importance of such fighters on the ground and created a more centralised partisan command. The territory of former Yugoslavia was also a hot spot for partisan activity and fighting. With such units and fighters in place, who knew the region they were operating in, it is possible that the Allies would have relied on such combatants and guerrilla modus operandi more heavily to keep up pressure against the Axis powers.

Could the outcome of the war have been different?

When thinking about the potential outcomes of the war, it really depends on perspective. In the longue durée, it is unlikely that Nazi Germany and the other Axis powers would have been able to sustain a victory, especially with an impending and perhaps even expedited US invasion and the latter's atomic weapons capabilities. But the outcome at the regional level, and especially for non-combatants, would have been more devastating than they already were, particularly in Eastern Europe and perhaps even beyond. In World War II, German military success and invasion into the East came with the devastating genocide against Jews and the mass murder of Roma communities, Soviet prisoners of war, mentally and physically disabled persons, and many other victims. An early agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union would have led to protracted persecution and mass murder, resulting in even more devastating human losses in the Holocaust. These losses would have led to even more irreparable changes to a region that had been home to a linguistically, religiously, culturally, and ethno-nationally diverse demographic of people and communities.

BELOW
Post-war Europe would look very different had Stalin not been present at the table

THE POSSIBILITY

1945

POPULATION DEVASTATED

With a substantial Nazi presence in parts of Russia under a second pact, thousands more young Russian men may have been subject to forced labour away from their homes and their families, adding to the tens of thousands who had already lost their lives fighting Germany. In addition to this, it is unlikely that Stalin would have stopped his policy of exile and imprisonment for those dissenting against his regime. Between the Stalags and the Gulags, the future for the Russian population could therefore have become bleak, adding more misery to the future of an already weakened nation.

1945

NO SEAT AT THE TABLE

A possible pact would have diminished the Soviet Union's role and image as victor against Nazi Germany and liberator of occupied Eastern Europe. Because of its sullied role, it is possible that Stalin would not have been at the negotiating table at several pivotal moments when plans for the defeat of the Axis powers – and also for a post-war world – were being planned and agreed. Therefore, Stalin's intentions in Eastern Europe may have been significantly thwarted, as too would have been the eventual geopolitical trajectory of the region.

POST WAR

NO PRIDE IN THE PAST

With the capitulation of the Soviet Union to the Nazis, and the subsequent second pact, the very essence of historical memory, and pride, would be much changed for present-day Russia and former Soviet States. How would the history of World War II, or the Great Patriotic War as it is referred to in some former Soviet republics, be studied and remembered today? For many the courage and resistance shown by the Russian forces, and role in the overthrow of the Nazis is the source of tremendous pride and even national identity. Without that touchstone in history, how present-day Russians and citizens of former Soviet republics see themselves might be very different indeed.

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What if...

D-DAY HAD FAILED?

The consequences of a failure on D-Day would have been felt for decades to come

INTERVIEW WITH

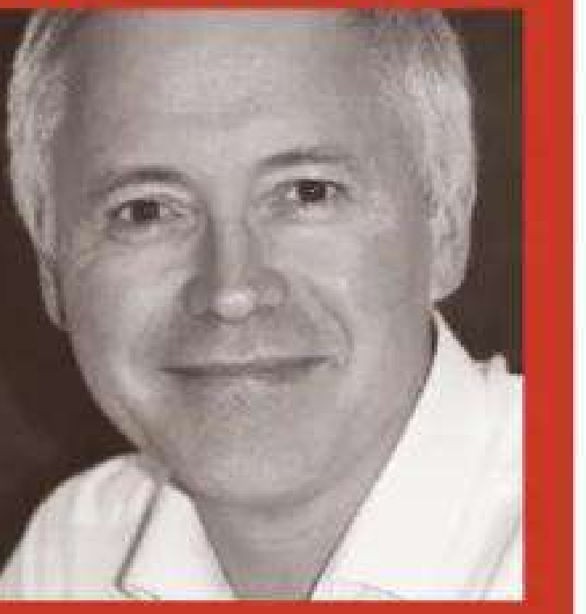

Image source: David Smith

David Smith

David Smith has had a lifelong fascination with military history and earned a PhD in the subject in 2013. He has lectured on the University of Chester's Military History MA programme and now works as a freelance writer, contributing articles to *History Of War* magazine and writing books for Osprey. He has written on subjects as diverse as the Battle of Britain, Mongol warriors, Dunkirk, German stormtroopers of World War I and the American War of Independence. His 2017 book, *Whispers Across The Atlantick*, was named 'Book of the Year' by the American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia.

Despite the daunting prospect of landing troops on the beaches of Normandy, Allied planning and logistics were so impressive that the operation never really looked like failing. Even amid the carnage of Omaha Beach, a foothold was established.

Had certain events gone differently, however, things might have played out in a whole new direction. For all the planning and training, there were potential weak spots. It would probably have taken a combination of mishaps for D-Day to have completely failed, but they are not far-fetched events, and had the Allies been turned back from the beaches, the consequences would have been dire.

Here, military historian David Smith considers how D-Day might have failed, and what the fallout from such a failure might have looked like.

What if D-Day had failed?

It's a fascinating question, and even though it was unlikely to have been a complete failure, there were things that could have gone wrong. From various directions – security breaches, mistakes in planning and a more concerted response from the Germans – there were threats. Don't forget also that the weather might have played a decisive role. The Germans were already well along the road to defeat, but if the Normandy landings had failed, it is debatable how much of a part the Western democracies would have played in that defeat, and that could have had truly frightening repercussions.

What was the biggest threat to D-Day?

A security breach of some kind might have been disastrous, but German intelligence had been comprehensively wrong-footed by the Allies (most notably in the acceptance of the Operation Fortitude deception that kept so many German units tied up around Calais). The Germans knew an invasion was coming. If they'd been given a little warning as to where it was actually going to take place, reinforcements could have been shifted to the Normandy area.

Might that really have made a decisive difference?

That would depend entirely on how many reinforcements were sent to Normandy, and of what type. Panzer divisions would have made an impact, but remember that the Allies had air superiority and naval gun support as well, so it would not have been a simple matter for German tanks to dominate the landing area.

Could the weather have made a difference?

Absolutely, and especially if it had deteriorated throughout 6 June. The landings had already been postponed due to bad weather. If they had started and then the weather had taken a turn for the worse, that would have been a dangerous combination. The 'Great Storm' that blew up a couple of weeks later was unexpected and showed how destructive the elements could be. Of course, weather forecasts were a key part of Allied planning, but we all know that forecasters can get things wrong.

What if the invasion had been postponed due to bad weather?

Eisenhower made a brave decision to postpone the landings when the outlook was uncertain. If he had felt it was too risky to commit to 6 June, and postponed the operation again, there would have been risks. The men would have started to suffer from stress and the risk of a security leak might have increased. It would have been two weeks before tides and the Moon were next acceptable, and the Great Storm blew up around then.

What about the question of supplying the army after the invasion?

Thanks to superiority in the air and at sea,

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RIGHT
Bad weather might have made it extremely difficult to feed more men and materiel onto the beaches after the initial landings

> “The price of failure would have been paid by the people of Western Europe”

© Getty

ABOVE
The Russian flag flies over Berlin. Might Paris have seen similar scenes?

LEFT
Russian military might grew steadily after the war and might have been enhanced with the addition of more territory in Western Europe

it is difficult to see how the Allies could have run into serious difficulties on the supply front. Even the destruction of one of the Mulberry harbours didn't hinder the Americans much (one admiral claimed the harbour was unnecessary anyway, preferring to land supplies directly onto the beach). The Pipe Line Under the Ocean didn't work flawlessly either, and yet the Allies persevered and built up an overwhelming advantage in terms of materiel.

If the landings had been repulsed, what might have happened next?
That all depends on how quickly the Allies would have felt able to try again. The scale of the failure would have been important in this regard. Aborted landings due to bad weather might have been shrugged off, but massive loss of life, due to multiple factors going wrong after substantial forces had been landed, would have been a huge blow. How quickly could the Allies have regathered their strength and nerve? It seems reasonable to suggest it would have taken a long time. A timescale in terms of months is unrealistic. It would probably have taken at least a year.

How might the Allies have responded?
There is no possibility that an invasion would have been shelved indefinitely, but by this stage of the war the Allies were already hammering German cities with strategic bombing raids. This might have been considered an easier way to maintain pressure on the Third Reich while a second invasion attempt was planned.

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

Gambling on the weather
Eisenhower makes one of the boldest decisions of the war, postponing the invasion by a day in the hope that the weather will improve on 6 June. He trusts his meteorologists, but he knows the risks if they have got it wrong.
5 June 1944

The Normandy landings begin
As predicted, the weather on 6 June is acceptable and the landings proceed. Everything now hung on whether or not the landings went smoothly. If any one of the multiple potential problems had arisen, the invasion may still have succeeded. If more than one thing had gone wrong, it might have been impossible to grab the necessary beachheads on 'the longest day'. Most importantly, if the meteorologists had got their forecast wrong, and the weather did not clear up on 6 June, then D-Day may have failed outright. At the least, it would have been postponed again, maybe for two weeks, maybe for longer.
6 June 1944

Allies gain a foothold
Although terrible casualties are taken on Omaha Beach, the necessary bridgeheads are secured and the Allies gain a foothold on the Normandy beaches. **6 June 1944**

Battle of Villers-Bocage
The Allies struggle to break out from their bridgeheads, with the British butting heads with the strongest German units in Normandy and making much slower progress than anticipated.
13 June 1944

The Great Storm
Mother Nature shows what she is capable of by unleashing a serious storm that destroys the American Mulberry harbour and gives a chilling indication of how the landings might have gone badly wrong if postponed.
18 June 1944

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

The weather worsens
Almost as soon as the landings start, the weather turns, disrupting subsequent waves of landing craft and putting more pressure on the first men to reach the shore. **6 June 1944**

The Germans resist
Having recently moved more units into the region, the Germans are able to hit the invasion force with more firepower than anticipated. The invasion begins to stutter. **6 June 1944**

Invasion forces recalled
With his men floundering, Eisenhower makes the agonising decision to call off the landings, issuing the statement of failure kept in his pocket and tendering his resignation shortly afterwards.
7 June 1944

The Russian summer offensive begins
Oblivious to events in the West, the Russians begin their huge offensive against the bulk of the German army, pushing their way steadily towards the heart of the Third Reich.
22 June 1944

Would there have also been consequences elsewhere?

Some experts have suggested that the Americans might have lost faith in the European strategy and shifted their focus to the Japanese in the Pacific. Others believe that Europe would have remained their priority and that fighting the Japanese would have taken a back seat for a while. Politically, a defeat might have dealt a serious blow to the re-election campaign of Roosevelt in 1944, and a new president might have signalled a new direction for the Americans. A further option would have been a shifting of emphasis to the Mediterranean. It had been considered something of a sideshow, but at least the Allies already had a grip on territory there. It might suddenly have seemed a much more palatable option.

What about the Russians?

The Russians in the East were making steady progress against the Germans. If D-Day had been repulsed, the Germans might have felt safe to withdraw some of their Atlantic Wall defenders to stiffen resistance on the other front. It is difficult to see how this could have materially changed the outcome of the war, but the Russians might have been held up for longer.

Were the German Vengeance weapons likely to make a difference?

They had great propaganda value, but strategic bombing on a truly terrifying scale by the Allies was not bringing Germany to its knees, so it is difficult to see how even a more effective V-2 rocket campaign could have achieved much. The Germans were researching atomic technology, but people underestimate just what a massive undertaking it was to create the first weapons, and Germany just did not have the resources available. Just maybe, if the war had been dragged out for a year or more longer, the Germans might have produced a viable tactical weapon, but they would have needed many of them to stop the Russians in the East. Forcing a negotiated surrender might have been an option, especially if they developed strategic applications for an atomic bomb and either threatened or destroyed a major Allied city. We know the effect that sort of action can have.

How might the war have played out?

That would all depend on how quickly the Allies tried a second invasion. Eventually, the Germans were going to crack in the East, and Russian forces were going to spill into Germany. Without Anglo-American armies coming in the opposite direction, might the Russians have continued to push westwards? The war may have lasted longer, maybe by a matter of months, maybe by more than a year, but Germany was going to lose. The price of failure would have been paid by the people of Western Europe.

What shape might post-war Europe have taken?

The iron curtain would probably have fallen much further to the west. How much further? Perhaps France would have been divided in the same way that Germany was as events actually played out. Some have even speculated that the Russians might have pushed on all the way to the coast. The Soviet Union would have been bigger and stronger in the post-war world and that would have had huge repercussions on the course of history. Would Britain and America have seen a need to embark upon a war against the Soviets immediately after they had taken over much or even all of Europe? As events actually unfolded, war with Russia was recognised as the next great threat as soon as the Germans were defeated, and it might have been unavoidable in this hypothetical scenario. It seems safe to say that we should all be extremely grateful that D-Day did not fail.

BELOW Could the Yalta Conference have taken place in 1945 if Anglo-American forces were not yet on the continent?

The Americans take Cherbourg
Progress at last in Normandy, as the Americans break out and take the strategic port of Cherbourg, only to find that it has been demolished by the Germans.
22 June 1944

Germans order the retreat
As the Allies amass overwhelming forces in Normandy, the Germans have no alternative but to signal a full retreat. Almost half a million men have been lost in the defence of Normandy.
17 August 1944

Paris is liberated
The Allies move swiftly after breaking out from Normandy. Occupied territory is liberated and the end of the war appears to be in sight as German resistance crumbles.
25 August 1944

The Russian summer offensive opens
Massive Russian forces swing into action in the East, putting the Germans under intolerable pressure as they struggle to hold their ground on two fronts.
22 June 1944

The British occupy Caen
The British continue to slog their way forwards, as Montgomery comes under increasing scrutiny for his failure to break through the German defensive line, but the Germans are about to crack.
10 July 1944

The Allies invade Normandy
Almost exactly two years after their failure on 6 June 1944, American, British and Canadian forces land once more in Normandy. German units put up weak resistance, disheartened following the fall of Berlin.
June 1946

American troops cross German border
With the entry into Germany, the Anglo-American forces have played their part in the downfall of the Nazis. Although the war will drag on for many more months, the outcome is in no doubt. **16 September 1944**

The Germans reinforce the Eastern Front
Having seen off the threat of invasion in the West, Hitler orders his best divisions to the east, stiffening resistance against the Russians. The rate of progress for the Soviets slows. **July 1944**

V-2 campaign intensifies
Having improved the V-2 rocket, Germany is able to employ it against London in response to the continuing bombing raids on German cities. A second 'Blitz' claims thousands of lives.
April 1945

Russians advance into Berlin
Finally cornering their foe, the Russians are on the brink of ending the war, as only the most fanatical German units continue to resist.
April 1946

Berlin falls
Hitler commits suicide as all resistance in Berlin ends. The Russians quickly move on into western Germany and beyond as the Allies prepare to attempt a new invasion.
June 1946

Allies and Russians meet in Paris
The borders of post-war Europe are set as the Americans, British and French occupy western France, while the Russians occupy the east. Paris is divided. In 1961, a wall is erected dividing east and west Paris. It stands for nearly 40 years.
August 1946

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What if...

JAPAN HAD INVADED INDIA?

In 1944, the war in South Asia reached a critical moment, as Japanese offensives threatened Allied control of north-eastern India and beyond

INTERVIEW WITH

© R Lyman

Dr Robert Lyman

Dr Robert Lyman MBE is an author, historian, fellow of the Royal Historical Society and biographer of Field Marshal Bill Slim. He has published numerous books on WWII, including *Victory to Defeat: The British Army 1918-40* and *Slim: Master of War.*

By the end of 1942, Britain was reeling from a series of devastating defeats at the hands of a rampant Japanese offensive, most significantly losing the fortress city of Singapore and retreating from Burma. However, in 1943 Brigadier Orde Wingate launched the first of several special forces raids into Burma from neighbouring India, targeting Japanese positions and infrastructure. Japanese high command set in place a plan, Operation U-Go, to invade Manipur, north-east India. Capturing key strategic positions in the region would cripple any hope of the Allies recapturing Burma, and could even galvanise a significant Indian Nationalist movement, keen to see the back of British rule.

What were Japan's aims in Operation U-Go?

When in early 1944 Tokyo authorised Operation U-Go and its associated feint towards Chittagong (Operation Ha-Go), the avowed purpose was to deny the princely state of Manipur to the Allies for any future operations into Burma. It was from Imphal, the capital of Manipur, that the then-Brigadier Orde Wingate had led… the first Chindit operation in February 1943.

The strategic rationale for Operation U-Go was merely to extend the Japanese outer defensive perimeter across the Chindwin River and into Manipur, the home of [the] 4th Indian Corps, which constituted the main land threat to Japanese control in Burma. Operation U-Go was not to constitute an 'invasion' of India. The air cover, supplies and troops necessary for such an undertaking did not exist in Burma in 1943 and General Kawabe Masakazu, commander of the Burma Area Army in Rangoon, did not want to commit himself to an operation for which he had inadequate resources.

Lieutenant General Mutaguchi, commander of the Japanese 18th Division… harboured a desire to press on into Assam. His evaluation of the British position in north-east India showed him that the three key strategic targets in Assam were Imphal, the headquarters of 4th Indian Corps; the mountain town of Kohima, which straddled the only road into Manipur from the Brahmaputra Valley; and the huge supply base at Dimapur, 74 kilometres (46 miles) north-west of Kohima, which held stores sufficient to sustain an army on the offensive for several months.

Kohima… in the mountains north of Imphal, guarded the route to Dimapur. If it were captured, Imphal would be cut off from the rest of India by land. From the outset Mutaguchi believed that with a good wind, Dimapur, rather than Kohima, should be secured. He reasoned that capturing this massive depot would be a devastating and possibly terminal blow to [Lieutenant General William] Slim's ability to defend Imphal, supply [General] Joseph Stilwell in northern Assam, and mount an offensive into Burma in 1944 or 1945.

Some 30,000 men were mustered for the long trek to Imphal, along with 12,000 horses and 1,030 elephants. Field Marshal Count Terauchi agreed to Mutaguchi's plan in September 1943, and a senior staff officer was despatched back to Tokyo to persuade the Prime Minister [Hideki Tojo] to authorise the plan. Tojo gave Masakazu strict instructions to ensure that 15th Army went

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RIGHT
11th East Africa Infantry Division, of the 14th Army, pictured during the Burma campaign

NEWS CHRONICLE, Monday, February 16, 1942

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News Chronicle

No. 29,882 JULY 15, 1944 RADIO PAGE 2 ONE PENNY

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MANIPUR LOST: SLIM RETREATS

Japs Say Surrender Was Unconditional, British Surrounded

THE JAPANESE HIGH COMMAND YESTERDAY ANNOUNCED THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF MANIPUR —A WEEK TO THE HOUR FROM THE TIME THEIR TROOPS CROSSED RE STRAIT.

of surrender were signed, said Tokio, by Lieut.-General O.C., Singapore, at 7 p.m. local time (1.30 p.m. B.S.T.). sounded at 10 p.m. (4.30 p.m. B.S.T.). It was at 11 p.m. forces began to cross the Johore Strait.

PREPARES NEW
E IN BURMA

MALAYA
MALACCA
Johore Bharu
SINGAPORE
Bukit Batu
Pulo Lavang
Bindai
DJIMAJA
TAMBILAN IS.
BORNEO
CHINA SEA
Pontianak
LINGGA IS.
SINKEP IS.
CARIMATA IS.
SUMATRA
PALEMBANG

"LET US MOVE FORWARD STEADFASTLY INTO THE STORM AND THROUGH THE STORM"—Churchi

Mr. Churchill, addressing the nation last night, confirmed th ingapore, and said:

Here is another occasion to show as so often in our long meet reverses with dignity and with renewed accessions of st [illegible] remember [illegible] we are no longer alone [illegible] of the human race are now moving [illegible] upon our action and upon our [illegible] We shall [illegible] Let us move forward [illegible] storm and through the storm."

no further than Imphal. Masakazu gave detailed orders to Mutaguchi on 19 January 1944. The commander of 15th Army was instructed to mount a strong pre-emptive strike against Imphal before the onset of the monsoon – by mid-April.

Why did Operation U-Go fail?

First, the Allied 14th Army fought harder and more expertly than the Japanese had expected. This meant that they were forced to spend more time than they had envisaged fighting to get into the Imphal Plain and capture Allied supplies. The Japanese were good at fast, fleet-of-foot campaigns where they bypassed sources of enemy resistance to seize logistically important or strategic points to the rear of a defended area. During U-Go, however, they were dragged into attritional battles that they simply didn't need to fight. If they had bypassed defended positions and kept their main effort focused on getting into Imphal itself, and of capturing Dimapur, they would have won a great victory. In the view of this historian, they could easily have done so.

Second, the Japanese were undone by the 14th Army commander, Lieutenant General Bill Slim, designing a stratagem to exhaust the Japanese in attritional fighting long before they reached Imphal. It worked. He withdrew his two forward divisions, 17th Indian and 20th Indian, into Imphal, undertaking a fighting withdrawal on both the Tiddim and the Tamu axis that severely degraded the Japanese offensive capacity in this area. He reinforced Kohima [and] used air transport to sustain a massive programme of supply to Imphal (Operation Stamina) and of flying out non-combatants. Allied access to air power was critical to Slim's success.

Third, none of Mutaguchi's three divisional commanders (15, 31 and 33 Divisions) believed in the plan and two at least – Yanagida of 33 Division and Sato of 31 Division – worked to undermine it. Yanagida, whose task was to seize Tiddim and advance on Imphal from the south, was horrified at the high cost to his division of the defensive withdrawal undertaken by the Gurkhas of 17th Indian Division, and refused to be rushed, undertaking a methodical advance that allowed the 17th Indian Division to fight its way back successfully into the Imphal perimeter. At Kohima, Sato refused whole-heartedly to support Mutaguchi's attack on Dimapur.

Finally, Mutaguchi's assumption that his troops could move quickly enough not to need a substantive logistical plan proved to be fatally flawed. A significant proportion of Japanese troops died of starvation during the campaign.

ABOVE
Gurkhas engage the enemy during the fighting around Imphal, May 1944

RIGHT
Lieutenant General William Slim, commander of the 14th Army, inspecting troops

How might U-Go have been successful?

The invasion could have worked if Mutaguchi had been allowed to drive on for Dimapur. Instead, he was forced to pull his punches at Kohima, and the great strategic possibility of removing Dimapur from Allied control was lost.

If Dimapur had fallen, the Allies would have struggled to sustain operations further north at Ledo, the start point of the Hump airlift to China, and would also have been unable to build up forces in Manipur to launch subsequent operations into Burma.

Masakazu was not thinking strategically when he refused to countenance Mutaguchi's request to fall on Dimapur, a decision which led directly to overall Japanese failure by forcing the Japanese to fight a sustained, attritional campaign at Kohima, for which they were simply not prepared or suited.

How important were the Indian National Army movements to Japan's plans?

The veteran Bengali nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, told Mutaguchi in 1943 that a Japanese invasion of even a small part of India, propagandised as a 'March on Delhi' to free India from the oppression of the British Raj, would spark a nationalist bushfire that would be unstoppable. Bose promised Mutaguchi that troops of his Indian National Army (INA), recruited from

THE PAST

SPRING 1944

OPERATION U-GO FAILS

Unprepared for a prolonged campaign, harangued by Lieutenant General Bill Slim's fighting withdrawals and undermined by his own divisional commanders, Lieutenant General Mutaguchi's offensives at Imphal and Kohima end in failure. The loss of over 50,000 casualties is one of the largest defeats for Japan in the war. Mutaguchi is blamed for the failure of the operation and relieved of command.

AUTUMN 1944

ALLIES ADVANCE INTO BURMA

With Assam secure, the Allies make tentative incursions into Burma in late 1944, slowed by the monsoon season. Amphibious landings along the Arakan coast and islands lead to Slim's 14th Army crossing the vital Irrawaddy River in February. Slim advances across upper Burma. Mandalay is recaptured after hard fighting by the 19th Indian Division in March 1945, enabling Slim to push southward.

1945

RANGOON CAPTURED

In April Lord Mountbatten launches the long-planned Operation Dracula to recapture the critical port capital of Rangoon. The combined air and sea operation meets little resistance, and the city has already been largely abandoned by the Japanese. An Allied victory parade is held on 15 June, with further plans in place to recapture Malaya. The Tokyo government surrenders unconditionally to the Allies on 2 September.

troops captured in Malaya, Singapore and Burma, would accompany the Japanese 'liberators' to give the invasion legitimacy in the eyes of the Indian people.

It was a powerful argument. If Dimapur had been captured, for instance, by a force that included INA troops, the political effect across India would have been profound.

But while Mutaguchi acknowledged the power of this argument, Japanese commanders had little time for the INA, and on the whole used them badly during the campaign. They undertook offensive operations in their own right on only a handful of occasions, and achieved nothing of any material substance.

Did British and Allied forces have a plan in the event of Japanese victory?
The British had no plans for managing the fallout of a Japanese victory, simply because there was no possibility of a Plan B in north-eastern India. If Imphal and Kohima – but not Dimapur – had been lost, the Allies could have continued to support the Hump operations from Ledo but would have been unable to undertake any operations into Burma until the Japanese had been defeated from the positions they held at Imphal. This would have been an enormous and difficult operation, only possible the following year (1945) with the prospect of an advance into Burma the year after that.

If the Japanese managed to capture Imphal, Kohima and Dimapur it would have been game over for Allied operations in north-eastern India and would probably have severely curtailed or even ended Hump operations as well.

LEFT
Trucks making their way along the mud-strewn road between Kohima and Imphal

BELOW
British and Indian troops converse after the relief of the siege of Imphal

Was a wider Indian uprising against British rule more likely if Japan's invasion were successful?
The Japanese had no strategy to exploit their capture of Imphal and Kohima, beyond Mutaguchi's bright idea to capture Dimapur and so facilitate a Bengali uprising by virtue of the arrival in India of the INA. It is certainly possible that a further uprising against the Raj would've been possible in 1944 but it would not have been extensive. Indian nationalists on the whole were scared of Japan, and saw their route to independence via a hand-over of power from Britain rather than a hand-over of power to Japan, whom most saw as simply another imperial power. Most nationalist opinion in India in 1944 was clear-eyed about the threat Japan presented to the achievement of independence.

How might defeat at Imphal and Kohima have affected British and Allied strategy?
The loss of Imphal and Kohima would have been devastating for the Allies. Militarily it would have meant the failure of Slim's defensive strategy and it would have meant the failure of the considerable efforts undertaken through late 1942 and all of 1943 to rebuild the Indian Army and to prepare it for war against the Japanese.

A Japanese occupation of Manipur and perhaps its debouchment into the Brahmaputra Valley at Dimapur and Jorhat would have demonstrated the continuing failure of Britain to protect India from enemy aggression, fatally undermining British credibility with respect to the security of its colonies.

Likewise, a Japanese victory in 1944 would have made it impossible for the Allies to reconquer Burma and thus meet its strategic aim of restoring the Burma Road to China. This would have critically undermined Britain's relationship with China; Chiang Kai-shek was distrustful of British willingness to engage wholeheartedly with the challenge of removing the Japanese from Burma and thus reducing the enormous pressure on China.

Finally, it would also have left a legacy at the end of the war in which Japanese armies in the field in Asia would have remained undefeated, allowing Japanese nationalists to claim that it was only the atomic bomb that forced Japan to surrender.

THE POSSIBILITY

SPRING 1944

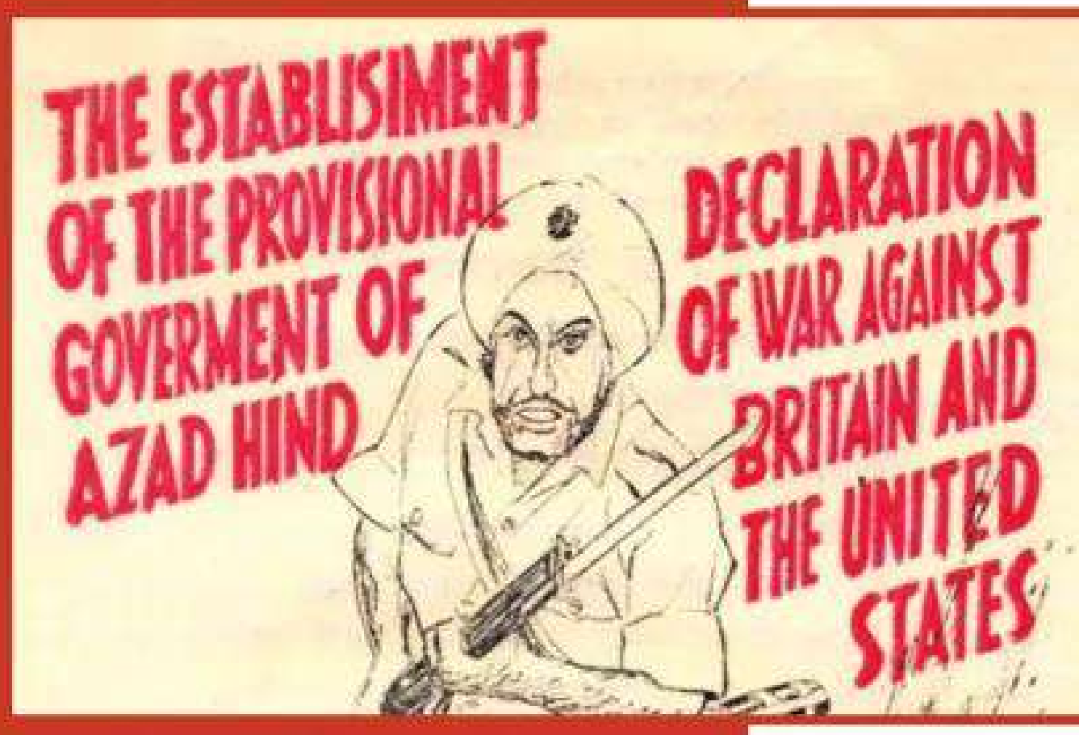
JAPANESE VICTORY

Realising that the Allies will seek to delay and attrite his forces, Lieutenant General Mutaguchi convinces his divisional commanders to make swift and bold attacks, bypassing well-prepared pockets of resistance in order to capture Imphal and Kohima. Sensing the great opportunity, General Kawabe Masakazu agrees to Mutaguchi's request to follow up his attack with a strike on the logistics hub at Dimapur. Though his forces suffer large casualties, Mutaguchi's gamble pays off and Slim's defenders are forced to withdraw.

AUTUMN 1944

'MARCH ON DELHI'

Britain's inability to defend its positions in north-east India galvanises support for Subhas Chandra Bose's nationalist movement, buoyed by the Indian National Army's role in Operation U-Go. Though Bose's promised march across the country does not materialise, mass uprisings put more pressure on the Raj regime which desperately diverts resources to protect its interests. This further weakens Britain's control of the region and its governance in India.


THE ESTABLISMENT OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERMENT OF AZAD HIND
DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

1945

CHINA CUT OFF

The threat of the Japanese advance as far as Dimapur forces the USAAF to eventually abandon the Hump air bridge across the Himalayas. This leaves Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek without thousands of tons of arms and materiel for its own war efforts against Japan. With Burma secure, and British and Indian forces in disarray, Japanese commanders are able to consolidate their positions, and commit more resources to their conquest of China and defence against Allied advances in the Pacific.

What if...

OPERATION VALKYRIE HAD ASSASSINATED HITLER?

Desperate members of his closest circle seize one last chance to eliminate the Nazi leader and change the course of history

INTERVIEW WITH

Image courtesy of Roger Moorhouse

Roger Moorhouse

Moorhouse is an award-winning historian and author of the critically acclaimed *Killing Hitler: The Third Reich and the Plots against the Führer.*

By July 1944 the Allied armies were back on European soil. As they began to push east towards Germany, the Nazi conspirators of Operation Valkyrie triggered their plan to blow up Adolf Hitler. The reclusive and paranoid dictator was encircled by a ring of steel and secrecy within his Wolf's Lair complex in Eastern Prussia, which only the most trusted could penetrate. Numerous attempts to kill him had failed, but on 20 July 1944 it was within his own stronghold that a bomb in a briefcase came tantalisingly close to wiping out perhaps the most notorious dictator of the 20th century and changing the course of World War II.

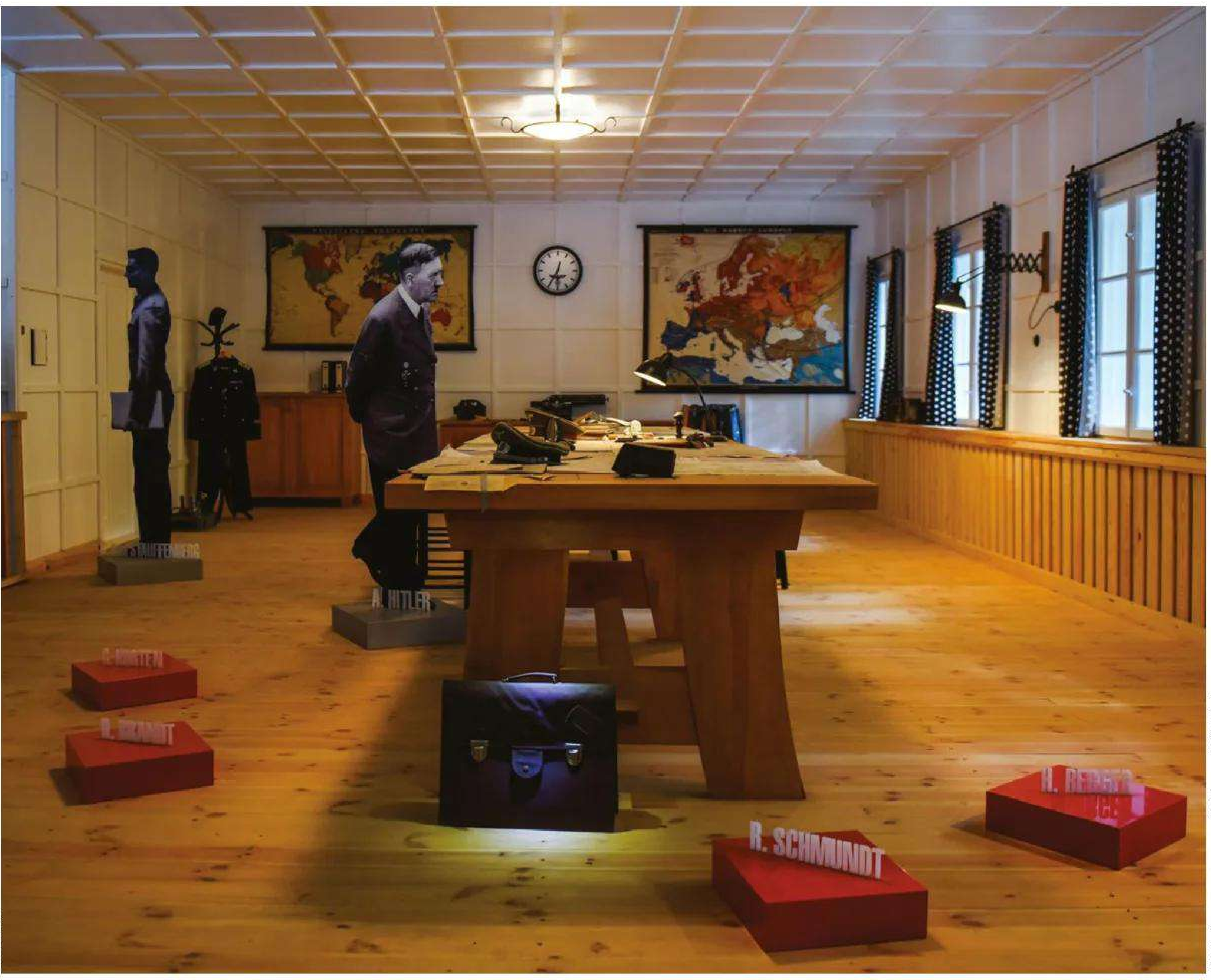
What made the conspirators of Operation Valkyrie believe they could succeed where previous attempts had failed?

I don't think the Valkyrie conspirators were necessarily more confident that they would succeed. As much as anything, theirs was a desperate act. It was a throw of the dice and a symbolic gesture – as one of their number said at the time – "to show that another Germany existed." What set them apart from the previous plots and attempts on Hitler's life was that they realised that it was no longer enough simply to assassinate their target. To achieve just this would leave a whole range of uncertainties and far too much to chance. They had to launch a coup to seize power as well. This made their task infinitely more complex and heightened the possibility of failure.

Of course, the great advantage that the Valkyrie conspirators had was that they had access to Hitler. By 1944, the German leader was a virtual recluse who was barely seen in public and had a highly refined and effective personal security regime. Anyone trying to target him would have to get through numerous levels of layered security checks, but a senior military officer coming to a briefing could avoid all that. What they were unable to plan for was the intervention of sheer chance. The briefcase containing the bomb was moved from its spot right next to Hitler, where it would've almost guaranteed his death, when Colonel Heinz Brandt inadvertently pushed it further under the table. He was just making room for himself, but in so doing the thick oak table leg shielded Hitler from the explosion. He escaped with just shredded trousers and a perforated eardrum. Those who'd plotted the bombing and attempted coup would eventually not be so fortunate.

Was there enough popular support, military strength and leadership to pull off a coup after Hitler's death? Would it have replaced bad with bad?

The civilian side of the plot was reasonably numerous and wide-ranging, but it is highly dubious that they could have taken power on 20 July, let alone held on to it. For one thing, the extent of popular



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RIGHT
This reconstruction shows Hitler's position and that of the briefcase containing the bomb

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EXTRA
THE STARS AND STRIPES
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Vol. 1—No. 279
Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces
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Wednesday, May 2,
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mil

support [for an assassination and coup] is rather questionable. Of course, there were many ordinary Germans who were tired of the war by July 1944, and some of them might have felt freed from their loyalty to the regime by the death of Hitler, but such was the power of Nazi propaganda and control that I doubt it would have been enough to sustain the coup.

In addition, the coup plotters lacked the determination and grit to do what was necessary. Instead of executing their senior opponents, it seems they preferred to effectively inherit power by assassination. Anyone of senior rank in the public eye who was not eliminated would only be a rallying point for further unrest and resistance to change. So in reality their actions did not match the enormity of the task in hand. They had recognised the need to not only assassinate Hitler but also launch a coup to take control, but perhaps naively they convinced themselves that the demise of Hitler would somehow trigger a popular response that would take on its own momentum to meet their objectives. Had they been more brutal they might have had a better chance of success.

Is it possible there would have been a civil war in Germany?

Civil war was always a possibility, but it would have required some sort of popular uprising against Nazi rule. In order to achieve this, the plotters would've had to overcome some overwhelming challenges: the sheer weight of the years that the Nazi regime had been in power, the charismatic hold of Hitler himself that was still at the centre of the message (even though by this time he was rarely seen in public), and the reach and depth of the Nazi information and propaganda machine. And it could have led to a more fractured country with various and complex factions looking for an opportunity to gain from the unrest and uncertainty. As it was, the Valkyrie plotters needed to dupe most of the army units operating in their name into believing that they were acting in support of the Nazi regime, but that ruse would not have worked for more than a few hours. For any sort of prolonged confrontation to be won, the plotters would have needed a large slice of popular support.

Under what terms would the new leadership have surrendered to the Allies? Or would they have fought on, and with what possible outcome?

Had they managed to secure control of the levers of power, the coup plotters wanted to agree terms with the Western

THE PAST

1939

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

Assassination attempts on the German dictator were nothing new and there had been numerous other failed plots to dispose of him, such as in 1939 in a beer hall in Munich. A timebomb was planted, and the explosion killed others but not Hitler because he had already left the event. Other attempts over years, and their subsequent failures, only served to increase an eerie sense of invincibility, both in Hitler's own eyes and in those of the millions who looked to him for leadership, inspiration and strength.

JUNE 1944

ALLIES BACK IN EUROPE

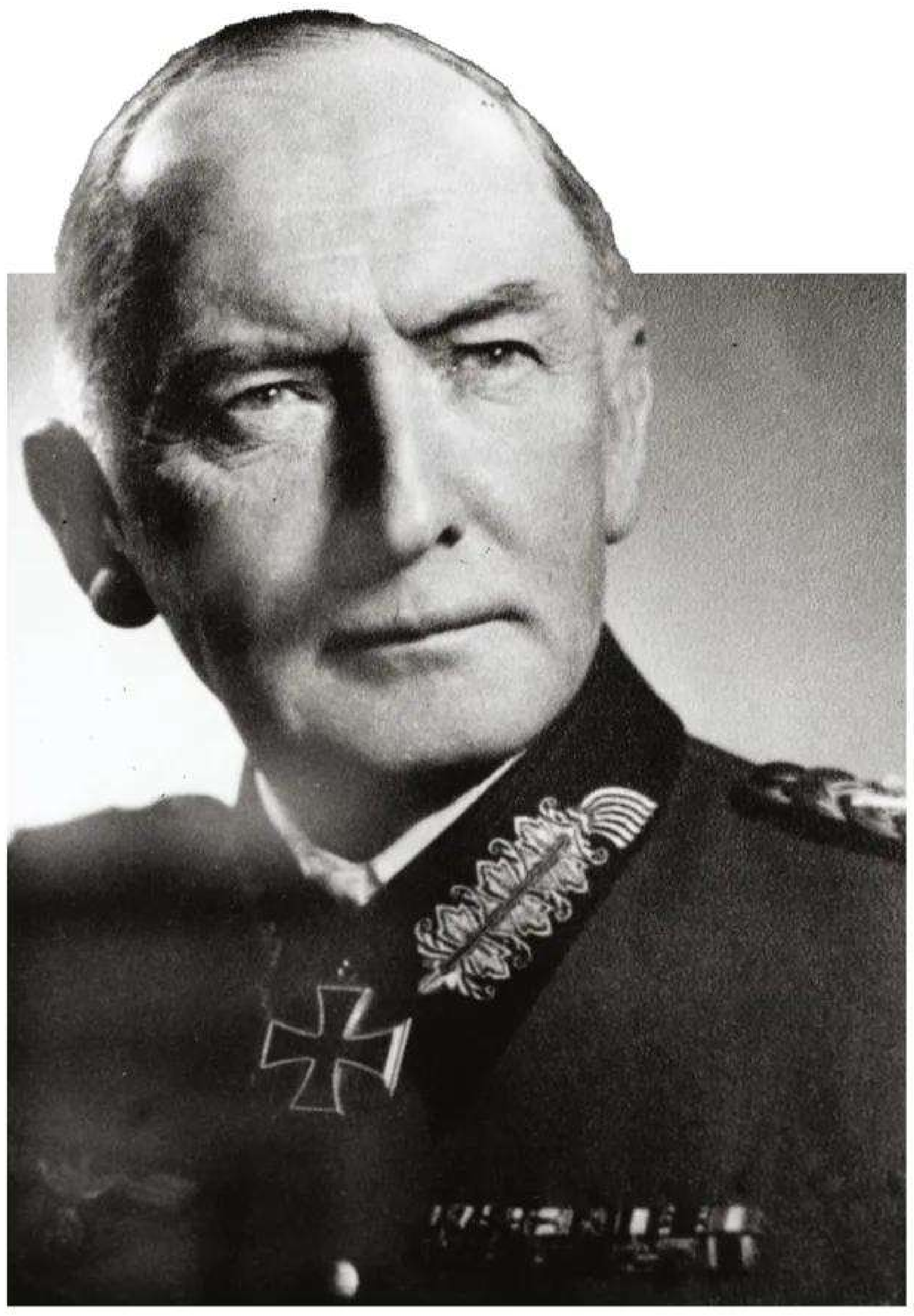
With Operation Overlord on 6 June 1944 – D-Day – the tide of the war changed dramatically in favour of the Allies. It became increasingly clear that it was not a case of 'if' the Germans would lose the war, but 'when'. Becoming ever more withdrawn within a much-reduced inner circle of only his most trusted military advisors, a deluded Hitler continued to plan his strategy to repel the advancing Allies. But for many high-ranking German soldiers and officials, waiting for the Allies to rid them of Hitler was unthinkable – they had to grasp the moment for themselves.

JULY 1944

A PLAN IN TATTERS

Being so close to the Führer was all in a day's work for Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg. That was the easy part. But for all the planning it was to be a stroke of fate that left the plot in ruins when the briefcase bomb under the table was moved at the last moment. As he fled the scene von Stauffenberg made the fatal error of assuming Hitler was dead. Mixed messages flew around the airwaves, but it was not so. They had failed. Hitler had survived with only minor injuries and torn trousers. His retribution was swift, with the conspirators and thousands of other suspects rounded up and executed.

NSDAP
NSDAP



TOP-INSET
Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben was executed along with other high-ranking conspirators

ABOVE
Nazi officials examine the aftermath of the explosion. Four people were killed but Hitler survived

LEFT
Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg was close to Adolf Hitler and planted the bomb

Powers while fighting on against the Soviets. But for any of that to be feasible, any terms had to be realistic, achievable and not imbalanced in such a way that Germany was merely just trying to soften the blow of defeat. It was from the East that the Germans feared for their future more than anything, from a Soviet Union that would inflict its revenge for what it had suffered at the hands of Nazi Germany. This was perhaps an understandable ambition from a German conservative perspective, but it flew in the face of the many expressions of Allied unity – not least the Casablanca Declaration of 1943, which demanded the unconditional surrender of Axis forces. In such circumstances, I think it's doubtful that any separate peace with the Allies would have been possible.

As the plot was before the 1945 Yalta Conference, how could its success have changed the Western Allies' ambitions in relation to Germany and Russia? How would the map of Europe have been affected? And what about Italy?

It is tempting to imagine that a seizure of power by the coup plotters in July 1944 could have caused profound change to the circumstances that we know played out. However, any significant change would have been dependent on the new German regime being able to persuade the Western Powers to effectively abandon their Soviet ally and sign up to a separate peace. It would also have relied heavily on how the new leaders of Germany were dealing with any possible domestic unrest caused by the coup. How would any unrest impact their ability to be effective partners, politically and militarily, in a rapidly conceived alliance against the Soviets? The Allies would also have to be convinced that the new leadership stood as one, with a single vision and determination which went beyond just a Germany without Hitler, or even Nazis. The idea of substantial change to the geo-political landscape post-coup, therefore, is a chimera, an unrealistic vision. The constellation of power ranged against Germany by 1944 was too great to effectively dismantle.

What would the impact on the war in the Far East have been and why?

There is a possibility that the war in the Far East might have seen some impact. Obviously the Allied forces were fighting on a separate front in a completely different part of the world, and with that came enormous logistical and tactical issues which extra forces could have helped to alleviate even a little. With a separate peace in Europe, it would theoretically have been possible for the United States to transfer more of its forces to the Pacific theatre, thereby bringing more pressure to bear on the Japanese. This in turn may have had some impact on how and when the Allies would and could have defeated Japan. Given enough time and resources it may have considered a full invasion of the Japanese mainland itself. One might speculate that a swifter Japanese collapse could have meant that deployment of the atomic bomb could have been avoided, and as such the actual use of such a weapon in combat would have remained very much on the drawing board as a theoretical and untried tactic.

However, given that any transfer of American troops would have likely taken months to put into effect, one must wonder whether the effect of such a shift might actually have been minimal.

THE POSSIBILITY

1944

FROM FOE TO FRIEND

Had the plot succeeded, it's possible (however remote) that the Germans may have surrendered and struck a deal with the Western Allies. From bitter experience the Germans knew just what kind of adversary the Russians could be, and they knew the terrible suffering inflicted by the Nazis would never be forgiven. If the Germans could somehow play on any doubts the West had about their Russian partners – and what they intended to gain from the war – then the Western Allies might, just might, be tempted to ally with Germany to keep the Russians out of Europe…

1945 – PRESENT

NOT-SO-COLD WAR

If the West had helped Germany escape the clutches of the Russian advance, perhaps persuaded by the inevitable division of territories and natural resources held by the Nazis around the world, then the present-day map of Europe may have looked very different. The possibilities seem endless: no Warsaw Pact countries, no Iron Curtain, no divided Germany and no Berlin Wall. The influence of the Soviet Union would be substantially diminished in the post-war era and the rising star of the United States would shine even more brightly.

1945

A DIFFERENT KIND OF SURRENDER

If the conflict in Europe had ended more quickly there could have been a dramatic impact on the war against Japan. In time, more troops, ships and armour could have been redeployed to the Far East to the point which, perhaps, an invasion of Japan itself would've been a distinct possibility. There would have been a much higher cost to pay in casualties on both sides, but if Japan had been overwhelmed by conventional forces then maybe the use of the atom bomb wouldn't have been necessary to bring about its surrender.

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What if...

THE NAZIS HAD THE ATOM BOMB FIRST?

With the ultimate weapon in his grasp, would Hitler have held Europe to ransom or reduced it to rubble?

INTERVIEW WITH

© S Kean

Sam Kean

Sam is the *New York Times* bestselling author of six books, including *The Bastard Brigade*, *The Tale of the Duelling Neurosurgeons*, and *The Disappearing Spoon*. His books have won international awards for literary science writing, and been featured on NPR's *Radiolab*, *All Things Considered*, and *Fresh Air*.

As soon as Ernest Rutherford created an artificial nuclear reaction in the lab in 1917, it was only a matter of time before the process would develop into nuclear fission, and become a possible weapon of war. From their intelligence sources the Allies were aware that if the Nazis were to align both their science and their resources correctly, then production of a Nazi atomic weapon was very real. With the Allies fighting on two fronts – a team of scientists in the lab developing the bomb for the West, and the military whose job it was to make sure the Nazis could never succeed, the race was on. But if the Allies lost that race, how might things have taken a different turn?

Why were scientists on the Manhattan Project convinced that Hitler was pursuing an atomic bomb?
Those scientists were convinced that Nazi Germany had the inside track on the bomb for a few reasons. First, German chemists and physicists had discovered nuclear fission in the first place, making them the world leaders in this field. Second, the Third Reich founded its own Manhattan Project – the dreaded Uranium Club – in 1939, giving it a three-year head start on the Manhattan Project. Third, Germany had the world's best industrial firms, needed to process the vast amount of raw material a nuclear bomb requires. No other country on Earth could match its genius and industrial might – not to mention its diabolical urge to wage war.

This realisation had two effects. First, it pushed American scientists to work maniacally hard on atomic bombs. Second, it convinced the Allies to sponsor a series of desperate missions to sabotage the Nazi bomb project, as detailed in my book, *The Bastard Brigade*. Spies, soldiers, physicists, politicians – all had roles to play. As one historian said, "Never, perhaps, have scientists and statesmen played for higher stakes, or has the sense of breathless urgency driven men to more extraordinary exertions".

How would it best serve Hitler's plans – as a deterrent, bargaining chip, or actual deployment?
Hitler wasn't exactly known for his patience and willingness to play the long game, so it's doubtful that the Nazi high command would have restrained themselves and used the bombs merely as deterrents or bargaining chips – at least not during the war. Hitler also saw himself in world-historical terms, as a saviour to his people, and given such grandiose notions, it's easy to imagine him justifying the use of A-bombs.

It's important to remember that anyone who grew up with atomic bombs understands how scary they are, but most people alive then did not share that instinctive horror. Atomic bombs merely seemed like bigger versions of conventional bombs, which would have made it easier to justify using them.

One often-overlooked possibility for the Third Reich was the deployment not of atomic bombs per se but so-called dirty bombs, which used radioactive materials produced in reactors. Atomic bombs kill you by releasing energy all at once in a chain reaction; they produce a mushroom cloud and vaporise you. Dirty bombs kill by releasing atoms that bombard you with deadly radioactivity, wriggling inside your body and poisoning you. Dirty bombs require much less sophistication and

RIGHT
Could Hitler have used a dirty bomb to scupper the Allies' Normandy invasion?

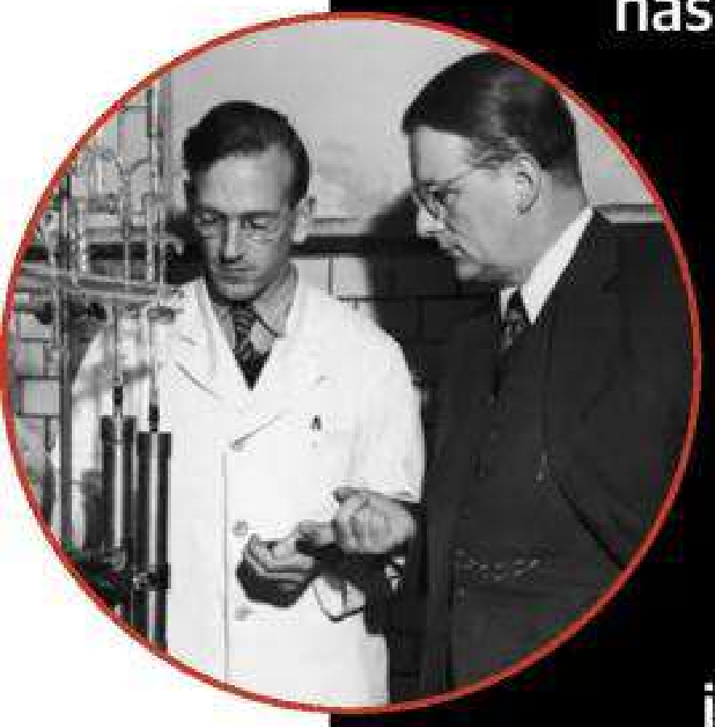
Images: © Alamy, Getty Images

THE PAST

1939

THE URANIUM CLUB

On the back of recent advances in nuclear fission, Paul Harteck, a chemist, writes to Erich Schumann, head of weapons research in Berlin. Referring to the ability to make an explosive far more powerful than a conventional weapon, he states, "That country which first makes use of it has an unsurpassable advantage over the others". Separate research institutions looked at nuclear reactors, isotope separation, and hard water. Among German physicists there was a view that a bomb could take years to develop and there were far more pressing issues around technology and the military that needed their attention.



1939-45

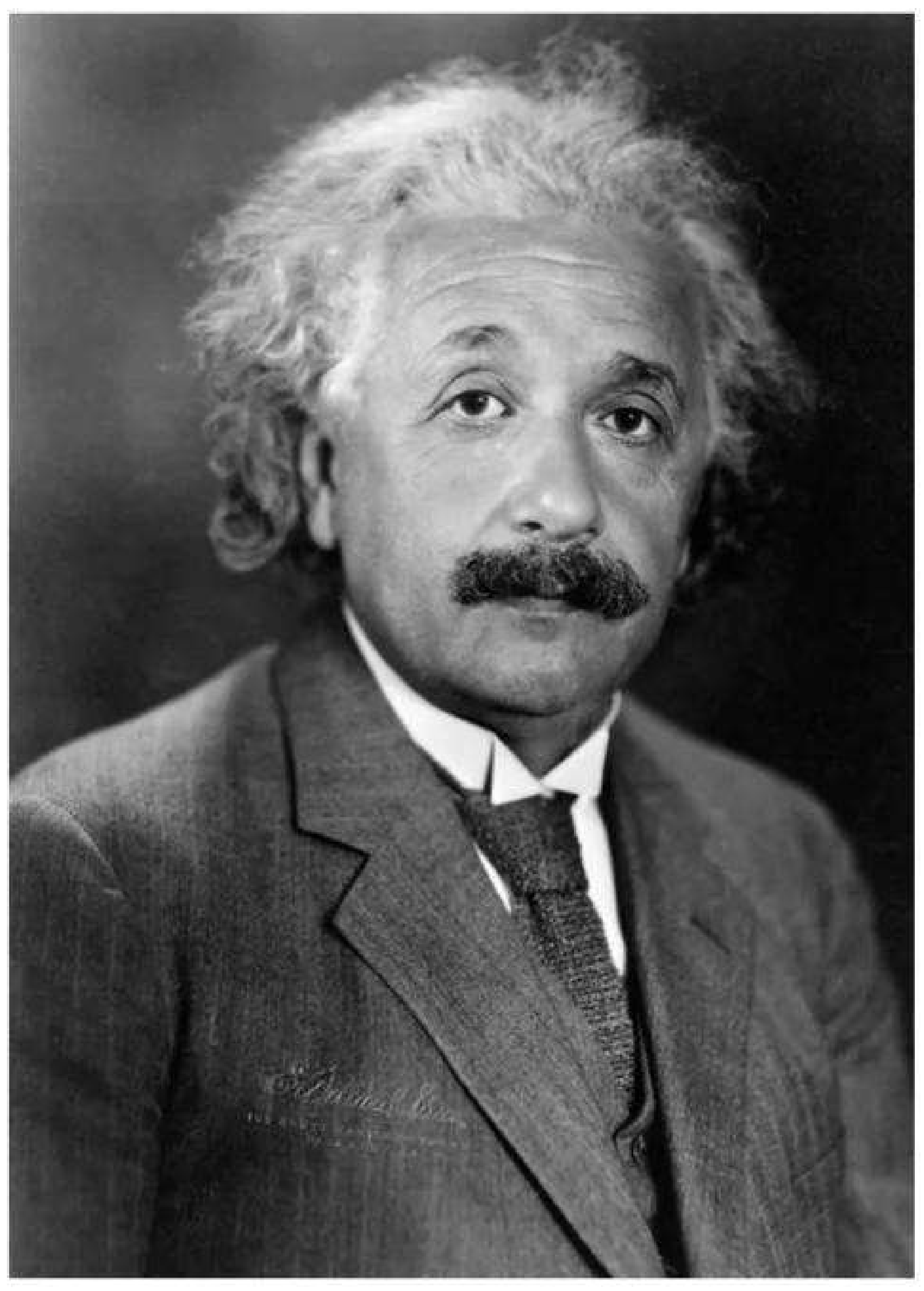
FIRST PAST THE POST

In August 1939, Albert Einstein wrote a letter to President Franklin D Roosevelt, where he stated that in his view, the Nazis were capable of producing an atomic bomb. The letter resonated with the president and by 1940 a modest budget was allocated to begin research. Britain had already started their own research and by 1943, a policy of collaboration was established with Britain and Canada, their scientists moving to the US to work on the Manhattan Project. By 1945 the budget had grown from $6,000 to $2 billion and there was sufficient uranium to produce a bomb. In July 1945 the first 'Trinity' bomb test took place in New Mexico. The following month bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

1940-44

CUTTING OFF THE SUPPLY

With the Nazi invasion of Norway in 1940 came the Reich's interest in the production of hard water, a vital element in creating nuclear power and, so the Allies thought, production of an atomic bomb. The hard water Vemork power plant at Rjukan was identified as a target. Following a failed aerial attack, a team of 12 specially trained Norwegians parachuted in on a sabotage mission. They reached the plant and laid charges. The facility and large quantities of heavy water were destroyed and the team all escaped. Undeterred, the Nazis rebuilt the plant, but it was destroyed by an air raid. With the sinking of the ship 'Hydro' and its cargo of hard water in 1944, the Nazi supply and its potential use was eliminated.



ABOVE LEFT
Einstein came to regret his miscalculation of Nazi capability

ABOVE MIDDLE
Stalin's Russia could have been overwhelmed by a nuclear Nazi state

ABOVE RIGHT
Hitler would not have hesitated in using an atomic bomb

are much easier to deploy: you simply have to spread the dirty radioactive material around. You can do that with regular explosives. You can even mix the radioactive material with smoke or powder and then use crop dusters to spray it around.

Dirty bombs could have been especially effective in the lead up to D-Day, because dirty bombs are suited to resisting invasions. Even a few hours of exposure to radioactive elements will kill troops. And because radioactivity is invisible, soldiers might not realise they're being poisoned until it's too late. The Reich didn't need to poison the entire landscape, either – just certain key areas such as ports, beaches, railyards, airports, highways and water reservoirs. By concentrating on this infrastructure, the Nazis could have easily neutered the entire D-Day operation with just a few ounces of isotopes.

When and where could Hitler have used it as a display of superior power, as with the US in Japan?
Again, it's doubtful Hitler would have seriously considered this option. Why merely show it off when you can deal the enemy a potentially fatal blow? (Germany did exactly this when using gas warfare in WWI – no warning, just deployment.) Hitler might have avoided destroying London or Paris as beautiful cities, but he probably wouldn't have had much compunction about obliterating Moscow.

When the Allies completed their own bomb, would they have used it against Hitler, or would it have ended up being a stalemate?
It probably wouldn't have been a stalemate. The Allies beat the Nazis without the bomb, and if it had been ready to use before the Nazis surrendered, the Third Reich would have been in even bigger trouble.

If the bomb had been ready, it's likely the Allies would have used it against Nazi Germany. Many scientists on the Manhattan Project had been run out of Europe by Hitler and were terrified that he and his minions would soon acquire the bomb and control the world. They explicitly and consciously joined the Manhattan Project in order to build a bomb first and neutralise the threat.

When considering questions like this, there's a useful moment to think of. Samuel Goudsmit – a nuclear scientist who helped direct the Alsos mission, the military's rogue atomic spy unit during the war – heard the news about the Nazi surrender and turned to a military officer he'd been working with and said that this was wonderful news: now they wouldn't have to deploy the atom bomb. The officer just looked at him: "You understand, Sam, that if we have such a weapon we're going to use it." That's essentially the mentality that led to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The military had paid a lot for its expensive new toy (nearly $2 billion in 1940s

BELOW
If WWII had gone nuclear, Europe would become a desert

ABOVE
Manhattan Project scientists had some ground to make up

money, over $30 billion today), and they were determined to try it out.

Atomic bombs had originated in fear, as defensive weapons to counteract the threat of a nuclear Reich. But as the German threat receded, so too had the notion of merely playing defence. Imperceptibly but inevitably, the bomb had been transmuted into something else – the most blatantly offensive weapon in history.

What challenges to unity may have arisen within the Allies if faced with this threat?

There was a sense among the British that the Americans were a little too gung-ho about all things atomic. Partly due to economic and material reasons, the British contributed far less to the Manhattan Project than the Americans did. The British also grew annoyed at the Alsos mission, the group of American army officers and scientists tasked with scouring Europe for atomic secrets. And before D-Day, when the Manhattan Project warned Allied commanders about the possible dangers of radioactivity and dirty bombs, the British rolled their eyes. Winston Churchill seemed especially dismissive, commenting, "This all seems very fruity". (Eisenhower, in contrast, was somewhat spooked, and soon initiated Operation Peppermint in 1944, history's first attempt to grapple with radioactive warfare.)

All of which is to say that the British might well have objected to the Americans wanting to use an atomic bomb in Europe, especially after it was clear the Nazis would lose the war. But they might not have been able to stop a determined American military from doing so.

> "Atomic bombs had originated in fear, as defensive weapons"

How might the outcome of the war and its aftermath have been shaped by Hitler having the bomb?

Again, Hitler didn't exactly show a lot of patience or restraint. But with an atomic bomb – or potentially even some dirty bombs – it's possible that he could have halted the Allies' advances and even wrestled them into a stalemate. And at that point, an atomic bomb would have given him a lot of bargaining power. Obviously Germany would not have been carved up into East and West, and communism almost certainly would never have taken root there and might not have in Eastern Europe in general. It's even possible a rump Nazi state could still exist today – a chilling thought.

If Allied raids to destroy their plans had been unsuccessful, how close were the Nazis to completing a bomb?

Thankfully, we don't have to deal with any of the awful possibilities laid out here because, in reality, the Nazis never got close to making an atomic bomb. It was certainly not due to a lack of brain power. Germany had the greatest scientists in the world back then. And there was no 'secret formula' to making an atomic bomb. The basic science was known in early 1939, before the war even started. The real 'secret' to making bombs is simply manpower: building huge factories and pouring in lots of money. By the end of the war, Germany's economy was in shambles, making that impossible, but if they'd started in earnest in 1939, history might have turned out very differently.

The really interesting question, then, is why the Nazis never built it. The famous physicist Werner Heisenberg worked on the Uranium Club under the Third Reich, and after the war finished, he and others swore that they had deliberately worked slowly and dissuaded Nazi leaders from pursuing an atomic bomb.

That's possibly self-serving. The real answer is probably arrogance. Heisenberg and others realised how daunting an atomic bomb would be to build, given the enormous industrial capacity required. And they reasoned that if mighty Germany would struggle to do it, then 'mere' Americans never could. They just didn't see American scientists as their equal. They were wrong.

THE POSSIBILITY

1939-45

USE IT OR LOSE IT

With an atomic bomb added to his arsenal of options, Hitler would have grasped the opportunity to accelerate his plans. Rather than using up all of his valuable traditional military resources – which he would no doubt need later for occupation of new territory – a single bomb could do the work of thousands of troops and armour. It is also a swift and decisive demonstration of power. On the Eastern Front, battling against both a resilient Russian army and the weather, a single bomb dropped on Moscow could tear the heart out of the Soviet resistance and Hitler would quickly gain his victory with small Nazi losses.

1939-45

PLAYING DIRTY

When looking for an advantage, Hitler could have used the science to look at other weapons that would be just as devastating in the long run as an atomic bomb. So called 'dirty bombs' would still utilise radioactive material, but distributed from much smaller explosions in a more confined area, for instance a battlefield or a city. The aftermath, however, could have been just as devastating to people – radiation sickness that could blight a whole generation. But if, like Hitler, you are in the business of invasion and domination, then leaving buildings, roads and bridges virtually intact would be a definite plus.

1945 ONWARDS

THE HORROR LIVES ON

It is likely that Hitler, had he had the bomb, would almost have definitely used it. But in a scenario where he chooses to use it to negotiate a settlement with the Allies, then the geo-political map of Europe may have been very different. With the Allies having developed their own atomic bomb after Hitler, the prospects of a nuclear conflict in Europe would be very real. The alternative may have been a negotiated settlement in which some form of Nazi state under Hitler would continue to exist until well after the war had ended. Given time, the Nazis would rebuild their economy and infrastructure to become a main player in European and global politics.

All images: © Alamy, Getty Images

What if...

HITLER HAD NOT COMMITTED SUICIDE?

Hitler decides to look his enemies in the eye in defence of his beloved Fatherland

INTERVIEW WITH

© B Hart

Bradley Hart

Bradley W Hart is the award-winning author of *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States*. He is also a podcaster, media commentator, and public speaker.

Facing an impossible situation, cornered underground in his bunker, Hitler's options have faded. Everything he had planned and dreamed for Germany was now turning to dust. The Allies had won. Outside, his troops are entangled in a deadly battle with the advancing Russians. Having left strict instructions to a faithful few around him, he pulls the trigger to escape the humiliation of capture. But had he chosen differently, found the courage to face his foes in defiant defence of himself and his country, would there still be the smallest glimmer of hope for him, and for Germany?

What might have persuaded Hitler to decide to survive?

Hitler might have chosen not to commit suicide if he believed there was still hope for a German victory in World War II, or if he believed he would be able to keep the Nazi Party alive in captivity and following military defeat. We have to remember that Hitler had been in prison for treason following the Beer Hall Putsch, and while there he wrote *Mein Kampf* and positioned himself for a political comeback. He was also obsessed with Frederick the Great, who had famously saved Prussia from defeat at several key moments. The Nazis appropriated Frederick as a propaganda symbol when they began losing the war. If Hitler thought he could either save Germany from military defeat like Frederick, or keep the flame of Nazism alive in captivity, he might have tried to survive. He saw no hope of either outcome and he himself was in failing health. Hitler would not have lived much past the end of World War II, whenever that might have come.

Could he have escaped? If so, how, and where would he have gone?

There was no hope of escaping Berlin after mid-April 1945. The German army had all but collapsed; the Soviets had more than two million soldiers surrounding the city; and escape routes in any direction would have led to almost certain capture or death. It is true that some high-ranking Nazis did manage to escape for a while, including Heinrich Himmler. But inevitably they were captured and either committed suicide, as in Himmler's case, or faced trial at Nuremberg. It is virtually unthinkable that someone as recognisable as Hitler would have been able to stay on the run for long.

If Hitler had remained in Berlin and survived the battle, he would have been captured by the Allies and faced trial at Nuremberg with his fellow Nazi leaders. Even the Soviets would have insisted on a public trial. Hitler would have taken to the stand and ranted for hours about his usual topics: conspiracy theories, anti-Semitism, and supposed Allied perfidy. In the end, he would have been convicted of all the charges against him and hanged. People would no doubt have been surprised at how delusional Hitler would have been during a trial. He would probably have even admitted to ordering war crimes and justified it in the name of his hateful ideology. It's possible that open admissions like this might have made it more difficult for Holocaust deniers to distort reality after the war, but it is impossible to know.

If Hitler had left Berlin prior to mid-April 1945, he might have been able to fight on in the Bavarian Alps with remnants of the Wehrmacht and the SS and prolong the war. This would have

Main image source: © Alamy, Getty Images

RIGHT
Hitler would succeed Hindenburg and become a dictator

THE PAST

1933 ONWARDS

RISE TO POWER

Germany in the 1920s and 1930s was a place of social and political unease. Having lost both the war and its dignity in 1918, Germans viewed the rest of Europe and the world with a suspicious eye. This gave Hitler the perfect platform to unleash his own ambitions. From his membership of the German Workers' Party, in which he orchestrated propaganda and fundraising from industrialists, his reputation and influence grew. By 1933 he was appointed chancellor by Hindenburg. Upon Hindenburg's death, the chancellorship and president roles were merged. Economic recovery and falling unemployment cemented his popularity. Despite the Munich Agreement with Britain in 1938 he was intent on German expansion by any means, and that meant war.

SEPT 1939 – APR 1945

THE WORLD ON FIRE

Hitler's maniacal obsession with his vision for Germany would lead to war. His twin objectives of German expansion and the establishment of an Aryan race would bring untold suffering and horror to millions as he attempted to obliterate entire ethic and religious groups. He was a master of propaganda, a predator using the sensitivities of a proud German people still hurting from the defeat and humiliation of WWI to exercise his power and nurture his ego. Hundreds of thousands who either supported or opposed him would lose their lives in World War II. But for himself he chose a simple, easy, and spineless exit.

APRIL 1945

A WEAK AND FEEBLE END

It has been speculated that Hitler had ample encouragement and opportunity to escape his bunker and the shrinking defences of Berlin. The Russians were on the doorstep and his options were diminishing by the minute. Some high-ranking Nazis did escape, but not for long, and their accountability was laid bare at Nuremberg. If there had ever been a time when escape was possible, it was long gone. On 29 April 1945 Hitler married his long-time mistress, Eva Braun, in the bunker. Rather than face his enemies, Hitler chose to deny them the satisfaction of capture. Braun took a cyanide pill. Hitler shot himself. Their bodies were burned and then buried.

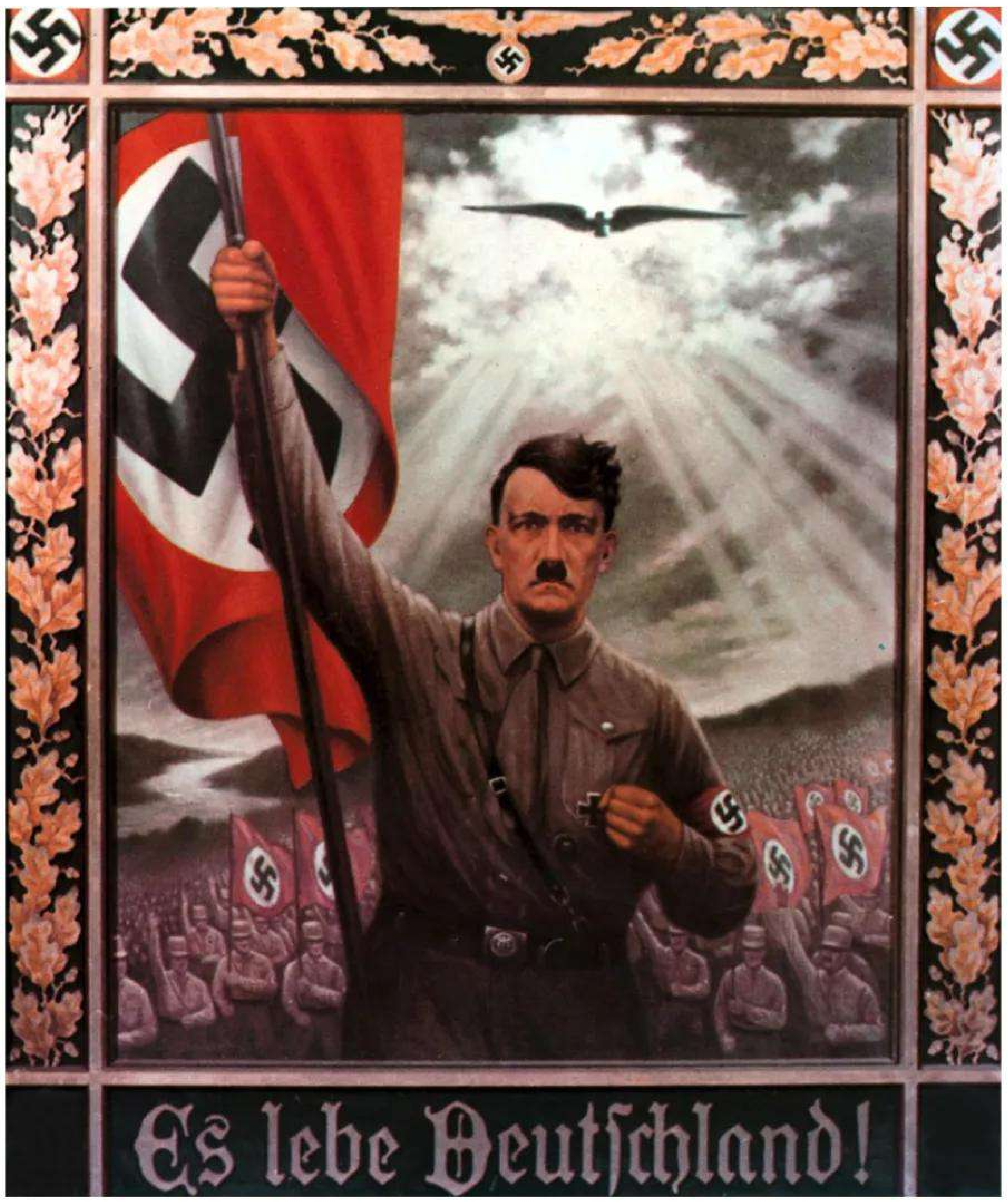
been a tragic, bloody, and pointless continuation of the conflict leading to tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths on both sides. Hitler inevitably would still have been killed or captured at the end of the extended war, probably by winter 1945.

There is a more outlandish scenario where Hitler might have tried to flee the country, probably by U-boat, which some people believe today without much evidence to support the idea. I actually doubt that Hitler himself ever seriously considered this idea. Hitler was an early 20th-century Central European who was not well travelled or well educated, he lived his entire life on the Continent, and did not even seem to show much real interest in the world outside Europe. While Hitler did have supporters outside of Germany and Europe, he never expressed any curiosity or interest in them and was downright dismissive towards people he thought were trying to emulate him overseas. There was no chance he would try to rebuild Nazism from outside Europe.

Because of the nature of his suicide, Allied governments investigated the possibility that Hitler escaped somewhere, possibly Latin America, for decades. Yet if any Allied government had compelling evidence that Hitler was still alive after 1945, they would have put immense pressure on any government harbouring him to turn him over, especially in the context of the Cold War where such an admission could carry geopolitical consequences. But, more significantly, Hitler saw himself as a European and it is doubtful he would have wanted to leave the Continent. Also, we have to remember that his health was poor by April 1945. Going on the run would have been physically difficult, even if it were possible.

Would there have been a difference for him between being captured by the Allies or by the Russians?

Probably not, actually. There was a surprising consensus among the Allies that there had to be accountability for the Nazi leadership and a public trial to ensure that both them and their ideas were discredited. Hitler did particularly fear being captured by the Soviets because he thought they might parade him (or his remains) as a war trophy in Moscow, so it's likely he would have wanted to surrender to the Americans if given the choice. Ultimately, he would probably have been tried at Nuremberg with his counterparts and hanged.


Es lebe Deutſchland!

ABOVE
Propaganda was key in Hitler's popularity

Would there have been any possibility of him striking some sort of bargain with the Allies, and to what end?

No - this was delusional thinking on the part of Hitler and some other members of the Nazi leadership at the end of the war. There was no appetite at all among the British or the Americans to cut a deal to save Hitler and Nazism, especially after the discovery of Buchenwald and the other concentration and death camps. The Soviets would certainly not have cut any kind of a bargain after being betrayed and invaded by Hitler in 1941, and their discovery of Nazi atrocities all across the Soviet Union.

The only possible end to the war that might have prevented the all-out destruction of Germany and capture of Berlin would have been if Hitler were out of the picture entirely, for instance, if the 1944 assassination plot had been successful. But even then, it would likely have been a prolonged negotiation between the Allies and the remaining German leadership to come to an agreement even if there were a ceasefire, and even then, there likely would have been differences of opinion with the Soviets who would have wanted to press on with the offensive.

But regardless, there was no chance of a bargain as long as Hitler remained in power. The German military leadership itself recognised this.

ABOVE
Hitler's bunker in Berlin was a labyrinth of rooms

How problematic would him still being alive – either in hiding or in prison – have been for the Allies?
Hitler being in prison might have been problematic if it gave his supporters a reason to go on fighting or resisting the Allies. Even after it became clear that Germany was losing the war, there were Nazi Party members and other Germans who believed Hitler would turn the situation around and deliver victory – or who were still committed to the regime's anti-Semitism. Remember that thousands of Nazi supporters committed suicide as the Third Reich was collapsing.

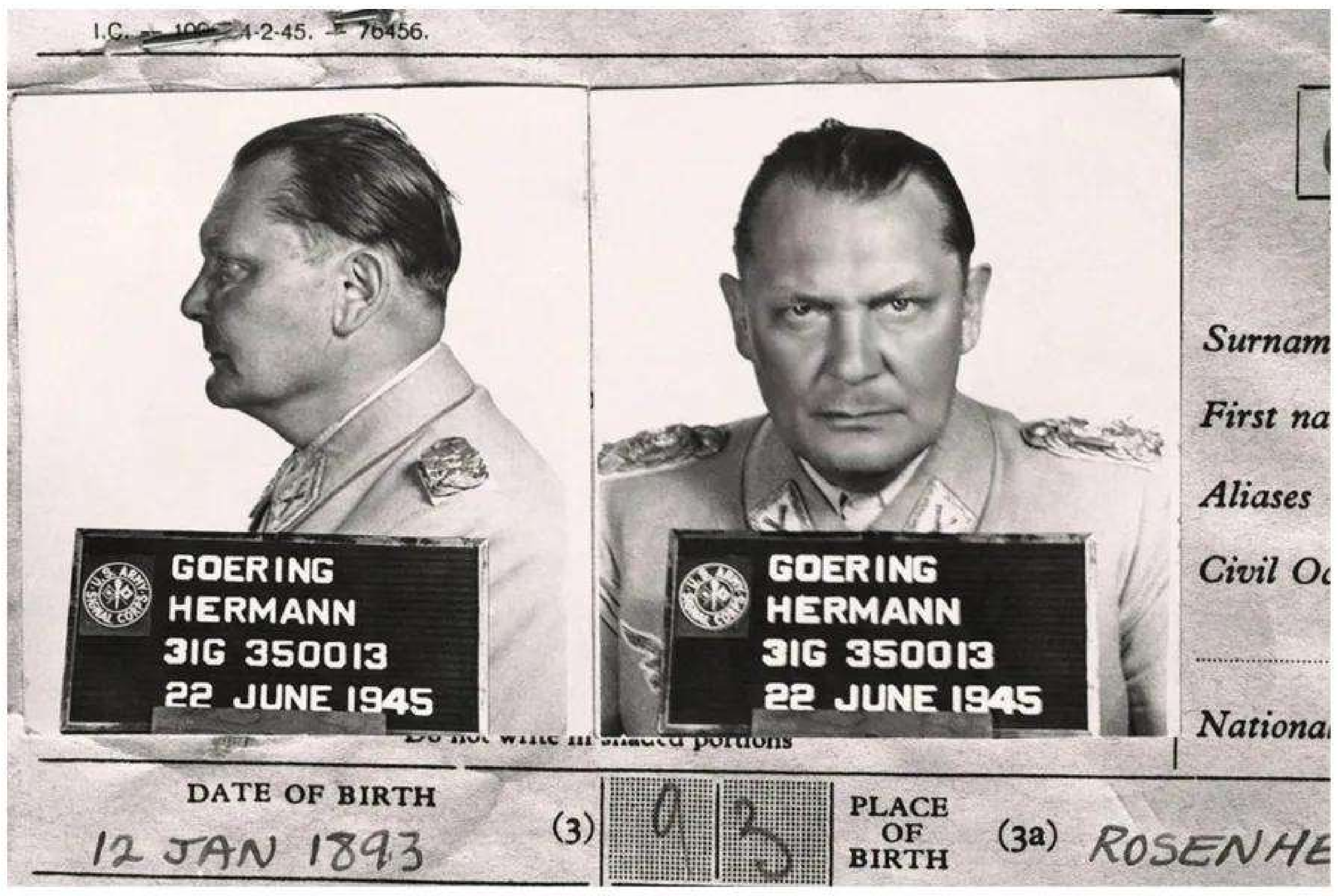
Hitler's suicide removed him immediately from the picture, taking away any hope that he would turn the situation around or make a political comeback in the future. Hitler's suicide probably did bring the war to an earlier conclusion than if he'd lived, if only by a few days or weeks.

Hitler's trial at Nuremberg would have been one of the most important moments in the 20th century. It would have stretched on for many months or even years. Hitler probably would have been unapologetic for his hateful views and his crimes, and he would have both admitted to them and defended them in long, conspiratorial rants. This could have served to discredit his insane ideas even further.

On the other hand, it might have perversely inspired others that he was somehow justified in his actions. Either way, Hitler's suicide deprived his victims of their day in court and has left historians with the important work of revealing the extent of Nazi crimes. If Hitler hadn't committed suicide, it's also possible that Himmler would have been captured and faced trial, which would have also been a critically important moment to deliver at least some justice to the victims of the SS.

What would he have done if he'd lived into old age?
It's highly doubtful that Hitler would have lived much beyond the age of 56 anyway, regardless of what happened. Accounts from those who saw him in his final months suggest that his health was declining, possibly due to Parkinson's disease. He was also heavily addicted to drugs and living underground in a bunker. If Hitler had been captured, it's possible that he would have died in captivity before he could face trial, which again would have deprived his victims of their day in court.

Hitler's declining health also made it unlikely that he would have survived for long on the run. Even if Hitler had survived, been captured, and stood trial, he would have been convicted at Nuremberg and hanged. Hitler was responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people; his suicide kept his victims from receiving the justice they deserved. But regardless, Hitler himself would not have lived long after 1945.



BELOW
Hitler could have joined Göring as a prisoner in the dock

THE POSSIBILITY

1945

FALSE HOPE

With Hitler still alive he tries all means at his disposal to become a touchstone of resistance to what few forces he has left. The war may have been prolonged, even for a short time, but weeks rather than months. As a consequence, many more lives are lost on both sides, with the inevitable Allied victory still the final result. It may be at this point that Hitler chooses to end his own life anyway, or is captured by the Allied forces to face the inescapable reckoning of accountability for his horrific war crimes.

1945-46

ONE FINAL RANT

Hitler is captured, interrogated, imprisoned, and faces his moment in court at Nuremberg. At this point he has, yet again, the eyes of the world on him and relishes the spotlight. He openly admits to his own actions and the brutal actions of the Nazi state, but denies them as crimes, justifying them with conspiracy theories and hateful ideas. The trial takes months, with endless reams of evidence, and Hitler offering his own, delusional, legal defence. His efforts are in vain, but he has had the satisfaction of once again taking centre stage as an impassioned orator. Convicted of all crimes he is hanged, and for the world justice is seen to be done.

1945-46

NATURE TAKES ITS COURSE

Support for Hitler and the Nazis does not die away with the defeat of 1945. His trial at Nuremberg may have had the same inevitable ending of guilty, but a potential split in the Allies as they debate the rights and wrongs of executing Hitler causes a problem. There may have been an element of thought that did not want Hitler to be made a martyr for the cause. By keeping him alive and imprisoned, there was the risk of him remaining a rallying point for Nazi sympathisers. Also, knowledge of his ill health may have enabled prosecutors to take the easy way out and let the dictator die in prison, perhaps even before the trial had ended.

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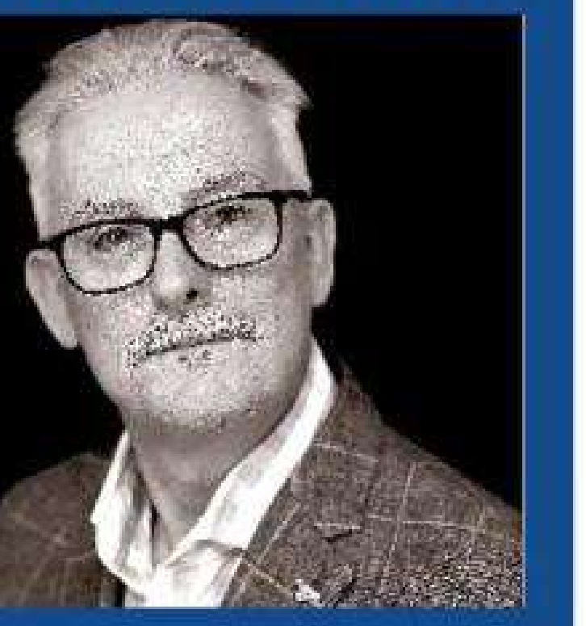
What if…

OPERATION UNTHINKABLE HAD BECOME REALITY?

In 1945, Churchill secretly planned war with the Soviet Union. But could 'Operation Unthinkable' have resulted in a third world war?

INTERVIEW WITH



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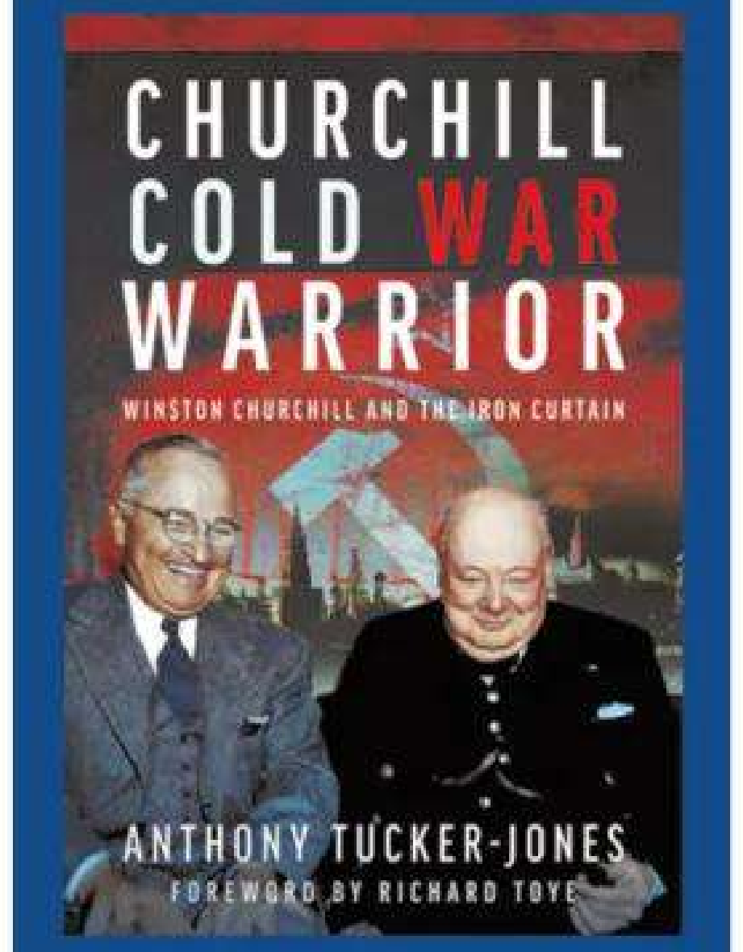
Anthony Tucker-Jones

Anthony is a former defence intelligence officer and the author of numerous books on the military history of World War II. His first biography of Churchill, entitled; *Churchill, Master and Commander*, was published by Osprey in 2021.



Churchill: Cold War Warrior by Anthony Tucker-Jones will be released on 30 July 2024 by Frontline Books.

In 1945, with Nazi Germany defeated, Britain was already planning World War III. Well not exactly, but Prime Minister Winston Churchill had become disturbed by the Soviet Union's occupation of much of Eastern Europe. On his orders a plan was drawn up to explore the potential of a military push to force the Soviet Union out of Eastern Europe, specifically East Germany and Poland. Of course, such a plan was never put into operation, but what if Britain had launched a military strike against the Soviet Union? Would it have been a swift, decisive victory? Or would it have ended in a third world war?

What exactly was Churchill's Operation Unthinkable?

I don't think there's been a military operation more aptly named, because essentially Operation Unthinkable amounted to Churchill contemplating starting World War III. By the end of World War II, he was extremely alarmed by the Soviet Union's expansion into Eastern Europe, particularly about what was happening in Poland. In early May of 1945, he instructed the British chiefs of staff to do a sort of feasibility study, exploring the possibility of Britain forcibly driving the Red Army out of eastern Germany and Poland – codenamed Operation Unthinkable.

What were the plan's key points?

Well, the plan was only put together in a few weeks. There was a British general election looming in July 1945 and Churchill was insistent it be completed quickly. It was secretly drafted by a small group of joint planners, because obviously what was being proposed was enormously contentious. When they examined Churchill's proposal, they realised that to ensure a lasting security buffer for Eastern Europe, should the Allies be successful in driving the Red Army out of it, they would probably need to occupy the same sort of area that Hitler had at the height of his invasion of the Soviet Union. Effectively what Churchill and the joint planners were proposing was rolling the Red Army out of eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria and then essentially repeating Hitler's Operation Barbarossa, across the Soviet border to within reach of the Ural Mountains, which originally had been Hitler's plan.

How feasible was the idea?

Well, Churchill was coming from a position where Britain's armed forces were at the height of their power. At the back of his mind was probably the idea that if he was going to act, now would be the time to do it. Field Marshal Alanbrooke, the British chief of the imperial general staff, was absolutely horrified by the plan and thought it was ridiculous. Churchill would also have required the cooperation of the Americans and President Truman certainly would not have agreed to such an operation. He, like most Americans, was keen on sending their boys back home to the States as soon as possible. Equally controversially, Churchill proposed that part of the force to drive the Red Army out of Eastern Europe would include recently defeated German troops. But the chances of Britain springing this on the Soviet Union were fairly slim because both Stalin (the Soviet premier) and Marshal Zhukov (head of the armed forces)

Main image source: © Getty Images

RIGHT
Winston Churchill, preparing to make his VE Day broadcast on 8 May 1945, but was he secretly planning another conflict?

> "Operation Unthinkable amounted to Churchill contemplating starting World War III"

ABOVE
The ruins of Warsaw at the end of World War II. The Soviet Union gained Polish territory and a communist dictatorship was set up

were somewhat suspicious of the Allies' intentions. Indeed, Zhukov ended up complaining to General Montgomery about the slowness with which Britain was dispersing its German prisoners. So tensions were already beginning to arise. Germany, a defeated nation, hoped it might end up siding with Britain and America and Stalin evidently began to worry that this would happen. So in a way, Operation Unthinkable was on the verge of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy if you like, but the practicalities of it were completely impossible. At the end of May, the British wartime coalition government was wound up and in July 1945, Churchill famously lost the general election. So Churchill, even if he had come close, never had the ability to implement Unthinkable.

If the operation had occurred, how aware of the plan would the Soviets have been?

The Soviets didn't really need specifics of the Unthinkable plan, as they were already alert to the fact that there was friction with the Allies. A major bone of contention had been the capture of Berlin. Partly why the Red Army shed so much blood taking it was because Stalin was determined it should be his prize for the terrible losses suffered by the Soviet Union throughout the war. Also, Stalin really made sure his forces pushed hard to capture the city, as he desperately wanted to ensure that the Soviet Union would never be threatened by Germany again. He was determined to create a huge security buffer in Eastern Europe and hopefully avoid another war, which I think he probably would have been prepared to fight to keep it. Now, following the Battle of Berlin, the Red Army obviously was in a pretty sorry state. They had suffered 300,000 casualties and were not in a hurry to renew hostilities. But the Soviets still had the manpower to resist any Allied incursions into their occupation zone. And as I say, in terms of them being suspicious, they were well aware of the large numbers of German troops in the Allied occupied zones of Germany, which the Allies seemed reluctant to disperse. They were probably aware of talk among German prisoners that they hoped both Britain and America might help free them from Soviet occupation. So there were a lot of indicators that tension was ramping up.

How do you believe the conflict would have played out?

Had it taken place, and Churchill had a definite date in mind, he wanted Unthinkable to be launched on 1 July 1945, before the British general election, before the Potsdam Conference and before America dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. So he wanted to act pretty quickly. And I believe he was thinking that if Unthinkable occurred, the crisis might leave him in office while it played out. The planners had decided that they would need to push deep into the Soviet Union, and if that had happened then it definitely would have sparked World War III. Perhaps it would have even accelerated the Soviet Union's own nuclear programme? With the Soviet Union caught up in a new war, it's quite conceivable that places like Indochina, China, and Korea would not

THE PAST

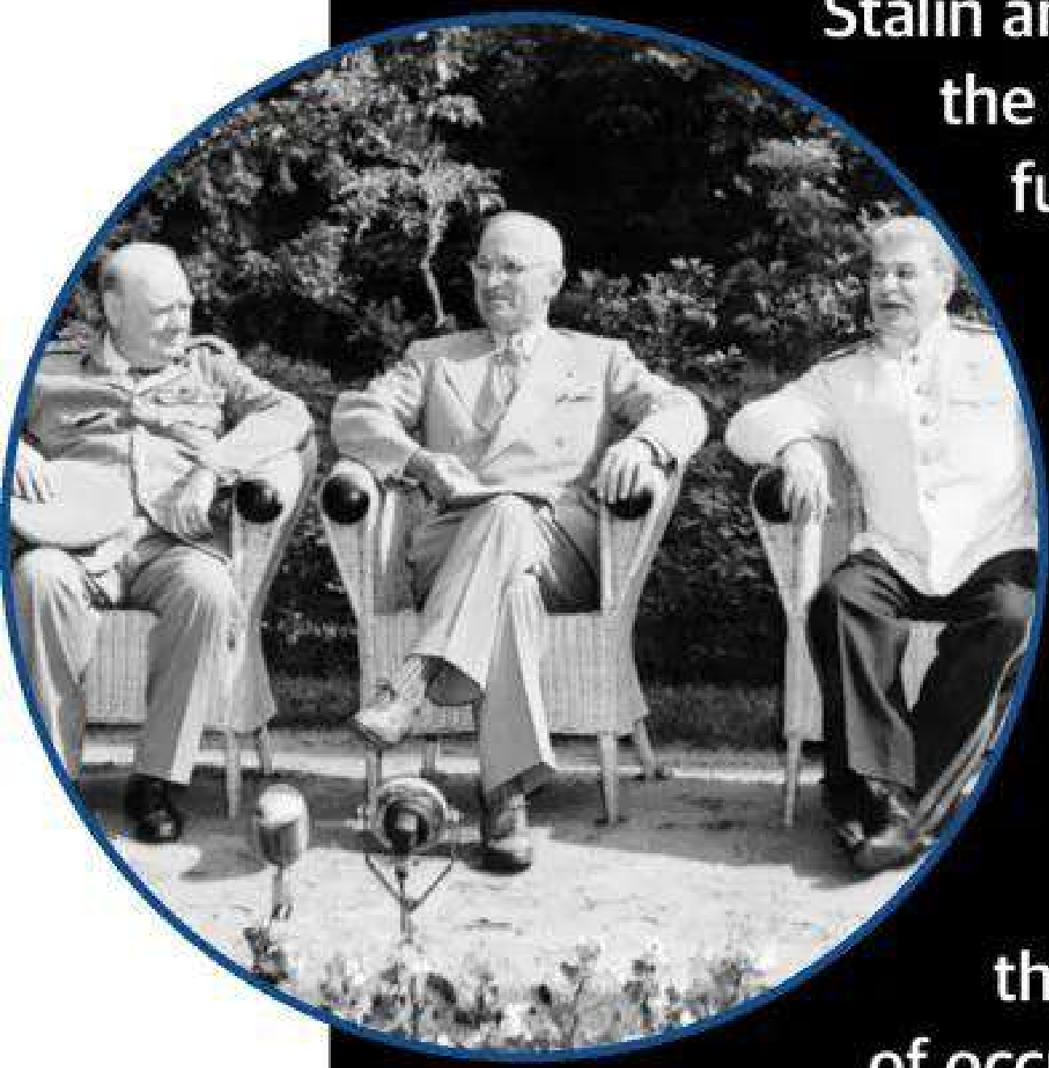
1945

DISPLACED PERSONS

Following the end of World War II, the Allied forces found themselves facing the problem of how to deal with thousands of German refugees. Among these were a large number of German POWs, who remained prisoners for several months. Partly, Anthony Tucker-Jones suggests this was due to the heightening of tensions between the Allied powers and the possibility that, should another war break out, these prisoners may have been required to pick up arms and fight on the Allied side.

1945

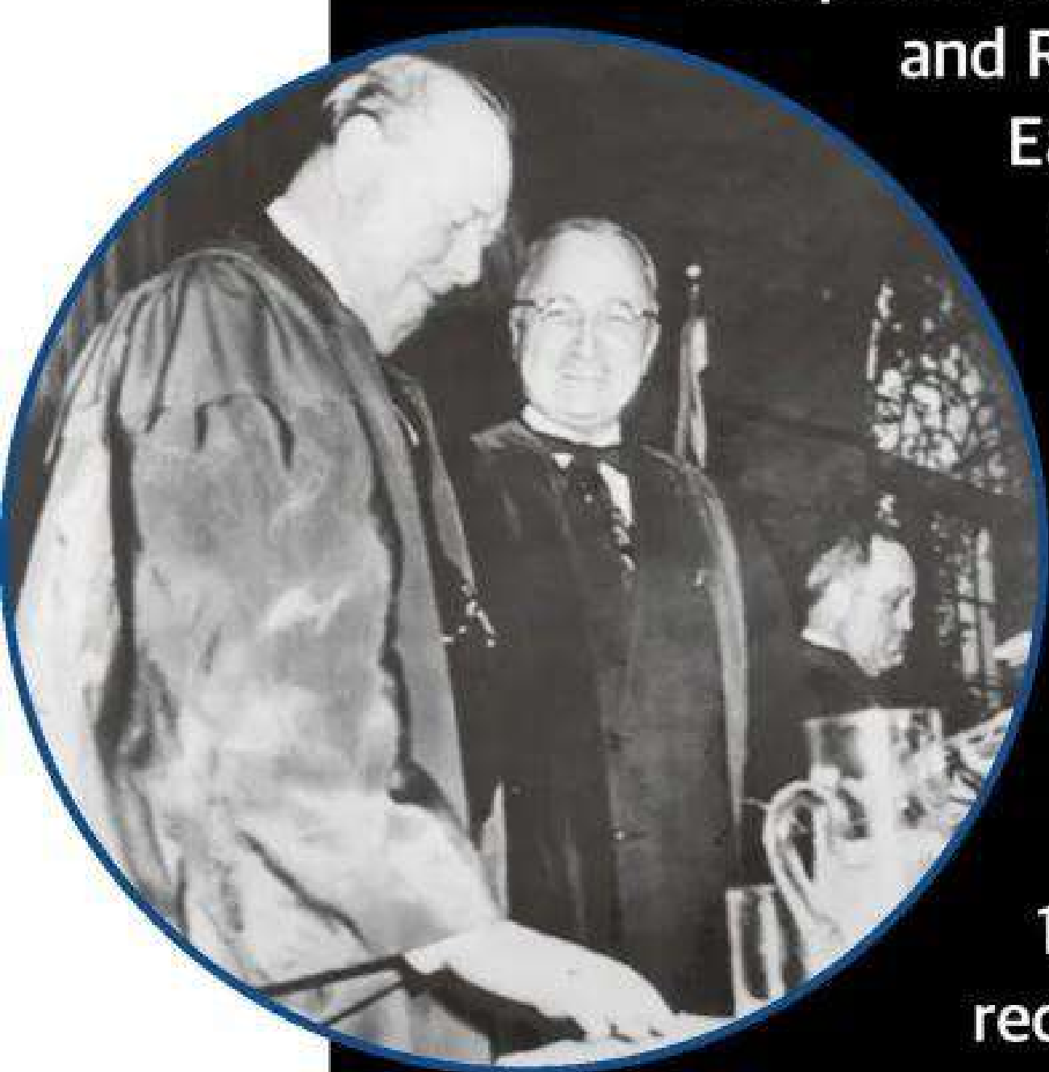
A DIVIDED GERMANY



In July of 1945, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin and Harry Truman met at the Potsdam Conference to further discuss the shape of the post-war world, following on from their discussions at the Yalta Conference in February. Here it was decided that Germany would be disarmed, demilitarised and then split into four zones of occupation, each controlled by one of the Allied powers (Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and France).

1946

THE IRON CURTAIN



Following the end of the war, the Red Army occupied Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, in addition to Eastern Germany. Stalin desired a 'buffer zone', separating Russia from the capitalist powers of Western Europe by establishing 'friendly' governments in neighbouring countries. On 5 March 1946, Winston Churchill recognised this aim when he gave his famous 'Iron Curtain' speech.

have fallen to communism, because the Soviets would have been too preoccupied to help the local communist forces in those countries.

Would Operation Unthinkable have fundamentally altered the nature of the Cold War?

Most certainly! There would have been no Cold War because it would have resulted in a shooting match, which would have sparked a third world war. It's hard to conceive of Unthinkable being a limited operation confined to Europe. The Soviets would not have taken that lying down. If, by a stretch of the imagination, America had been involved, or perhaps the Soviet Union attacked America across the Arctic Circle in retaliation, that would have really escalated matters. Additionally, if a new war had broken out in Europe, the Allies were still at war with Japan at that point – Japan didn't surrender until mid-August 1945. So it would have slowed down the defeat of the Japanese. Once Germany was defeated, the Soviet Union was committed to joining the war against Japan, which came in the form of the Red Army invading Japanese-occupied Manchuria and defeating all their troops there. Well, that wouldn't have happened if there was a war between the Western Allies and Soviet Union. So the war in the Pacific would have also dragged on. The Red Army would not have overrun Manchuria and would not have been in a position to help Mao Zedong's Chinese communists or those in Korea and Indochina.

If Operation Unthinkable had occurred, could it have resulted in all-out war?

As I said, I cannot conceive of Unthinkable being a limited security operation in Europe, the Soviet Union simply would not have put up with it. That's assuming the Allies even had the ability to push the Red Army all the way out of Eastern Europe. I think Churchill imagined a sort of Blitzkrieg, a highly mobile war that would kick the Red Army out swiftly. But keeping in mind how competent the Red Army was by that stage, how much combat experience it had, Stalin would have put up a stiff fight. If the British Army had pushed into the Soviet occupation zone, most likely it would have been spearheaded by the famous 'Desert Rats' (the 7th Armoured Division at Hamburg), the 51st Highland Division at Bremerhaven, and the 3rd Infantry Division who were in Bremen. The equally famous 'Hell on Wheels', the American 2nd Armored Division, were in Münchberg, so if the Americans did take part, they probably would have been in the forefront as well. But Churchill would never have got agreement from America to conduct a pre-emptive war. He wouldn't have got it in Britain either. As I said, Field Marshall Alanbrooke was horrified at the very idea. He thought Churchill had lost his marbles even contemplating such madness. Never has a plan been so well codenamed as Unthinkable. Certainly the outcome of such a course of action is definitely unthinkable. Not surprisingly, it was kept top secret until 1998.

BELOW Soviet sailors during the invasion of Manchuria in September 1945. Had Britain attacked the Red Army, it's likely the USSR would not have provided assistance in the Pacific War

THE POSSIBILITY

1945 ONWARDS

MORE WAR FOR WINSTON?

British prime minister Winston Churchill found himself ousted from 10 Downing Street following the British general election on the 5 July 1945 but would once again become prime minister in 1951 at age 76. However, if he had launched Operation Unthinkable on his chosen date of 1 July, prior to the election, would the emergency have forced him to stay in the position? If so, who would have won the next election? Would we ever have seen the reforms, such as the introduction of the NHS, introduced by Clement Attlee?

1945

AN EXTENDED PACIFIC WAR?

Despite the end of the war in Europe, Soviet forces pledged to assist in the ongoing war in the Pacific. Known as Operation August Storm, on 8 August 1945 (just two days after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima), over 1 million Red Army troops invaded Manchuria and Sakhalin island. The invasion was influential in contributing to the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945. Any American involvement in Operation Unthinkable would have put an end to Soviet assistance in the Pacific War, meaning it potentially could have dragged on for months longer…

1945 ONWARDS

NO COLD WAR?

From 1945 until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the West and the East were in a Cold War. Berlin and indeed Germany as a whole remained divided, with the former separated by a vast concrete wall, which became an enduring symbol of the Cold conflict as a whole. Throughout these 46 years, at several points the tensions between the two powers threatened to escalate. In 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis saw the world poised for all-out nuclear conflict. Had Operation Unthinkable occurred, it's likely the Cold War would not. But what would the international situation look like today?

ACHTUNG!
Sie verlassen jetzt
WEST-BERLIN

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What if...

JAPAN REFUSED TO SURRENDER?

Massive invasions by the Americans and the Soviets planned after first-ever atomic bomb attacks fail to dent Japan's resolve

INTERVIEW WITH

© Professor Robert Pape

Professor Robert Pape

Robert Pape is Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago. He is an expert in international security affairs, and in 1993 published a detailed journal article on Japan's surrender in WWII.

What was the background to the US dropping two atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945?

We defeated Germany in the spring of 1945 and then started to really focus on Japan. That became the main theatre of war. And as the summer continued, it became clear that the city bombings of Japan and the military pressures that we were putting Japan under were not going to be enough. It wasn't clear exactly what the future was going to be. And we had meetings with the Soviets at Potsdam in July, and it became very clear that the Soviets were going to launch a ground defence within Manchuria against the Japanese army. And that set of meetings then essentially made it clear that if the United States was going to play a role, that it was the atomic bomb that was really going to be the option here.

Why did Japan announce its decision to surrender on 15 August 1945?

The first atomic bomb actually is not generating much pressure on the Japanese political leaders to surrender. The key obstacle it turns out, which we did not know at the time, was the Japanese army. [Korechika] Anami, the top general of the Japanese army, was the most resistant to any surrender. And, after we dropped the first bomb on Hiroshima, there's actually a continued logjam. And then on the night of 8 August, that's when the Soviet Union launches this massive invasion into Manchuria. And it is just a crushing blow. They just are piercing right through the Japanese army like a hot knife through butter, and within hours [the Japanese army is] just cut to pieces. They're not able to put up any organised resistance. About 12 hours after the Soviet invasion happened, that's when we dropped the second bomb and that's when Anami stops putting up resistance. He essentially stopped vetoing the surrender. It's Anami's decision that really leads to the surrender, and that veto is tightly linked to the Soviet invasion.

How did Japan's surrender play out?

[After the Soviet invasion] the whole plan for the home island defence now was completely worthless. And that's when Anami just stops resisting. And then he goes even further about a day later, because the Japanese army had a plan that if the emperor were to surrender without their agreement, that they were going to kill the emperor and replace them with Anami. Well, Anami commits hara-kiri [a form of suicide], and that prevents the military plan from being executed. He decapitates that plan so that the surrender actually happens. And then on 15 August, that's when the emperor announces the surrender. And it's a really important event that speech for the surrender, because all the resistance essentially ends. That's really the turning point where there's just no resistance.

What would the Americans have done if Japan hadn't surrendered?

We know what would have happened in the very next month or so. There are four home islands of Japan. Kyushu is the southernmost island. That was going to be the target of the first invasion. And that was going to happen sometime in that early fall, 1945, had Japan not surrendered. When the Soviets invaded Manchuria and

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RIGHT
Japan formally signed its surrender on 2 September 1945

Images: © Alamy, Getty Images

HOKKAIDO
Sapporo
5th Area Army
11th Area Army
Sendai
HONSHU
12th Area Army (10th Air Division)
TOKYO
Yokohama
Nagoya
Osaka
Kobe
13th Area Army
Hiroshima
Kure
Inland Sea
Yawata
Fukuoka
Sasebo
Nagasaki
SHIKOKU
KYUSHU
15th Area Army (11th Air Division)
16th Area Army (12th Air Division)

THE PAST

7 DECEMBER 1941

OUT OF THE BLUE

The US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii is attacked by Japanese forces. The Japanese had already occupied all of Indochina and had entered into an alliance with Germany and Italy. Commerce agreements had been cancelled and Japanese goods under embargo. Negotiations were taking place but getting nowhere. With the first Japanese wave, US planes were attacked on the ground. More than 150 were destroyed. In the harbour, with the fleet moored for the weekend, almost 20 ships were sunk or damaged. Around 2,400 military personnel were killed and over 1,145 injured. Although humiliated by the attack, it galvanised the American people behind going to war.

1942-43

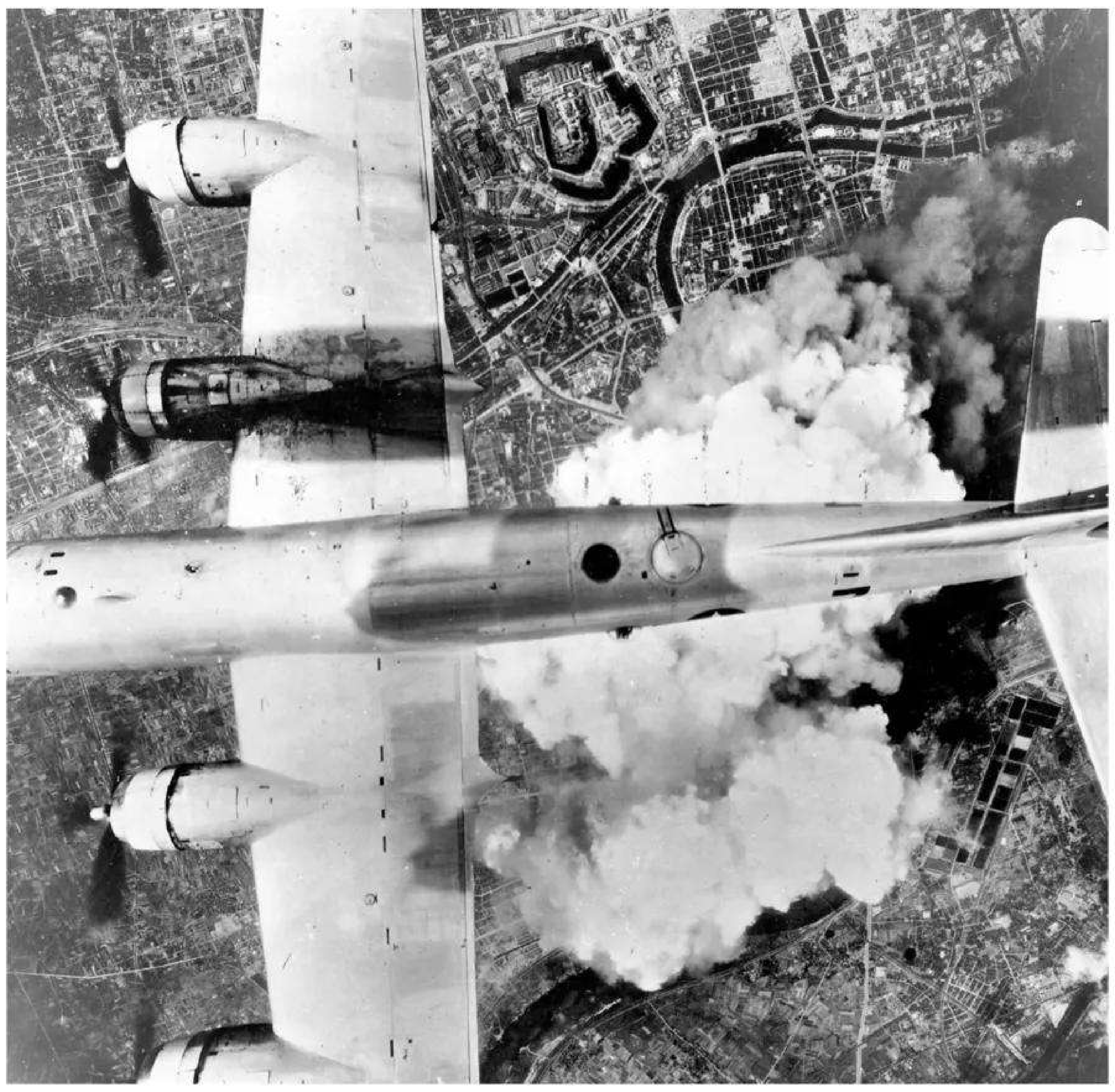
ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Following Pearl Harbor, the Japanese forces pressed ahead with the occupation of a huge area of the Pacific. The Allied forces aimed to contain the Japanese, keep supply lines open and counterattack with amphibious forces. Following the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Battle of Midway became a pivotal moment and caused serious damage to Japanese forces and morale. The Battle of Guadalcanal was six months of attack and counterattack with losses on both sides. Eventually the US Army and Marines won through, and the American and Australian forces began to retake territory.

1943-45

THE END IS NIGH

After Guadalcanal Japan realised it was on the defensive, its forces stretched. Rabaul was encircled and neutralised. Japan's Eastern flank was vulnerable. With the fall of Saipan in the Marianas, bombers could reach Japan itself. Guam was to follow, and then Tinian, the base of the Enola Gay. Iwo Jima was small but significant, and one of the hardest fought battles of the campaign, but it was secured. The invasion of Okinawa was the largest amphibious landing of the entire Pacific war. Japanese cities were now being firebombed on a regular basis. The defeat of Japan from the air seemed possible. It was to take the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by a terrifying new weapon for Japan to accept it was beaten.



> "There weren't the atomic bombs to drop. The US only had two more"

just wiped [the Japanese army] to pieces, this showed that the Japanese army's plan for homeland defence was a non-starter. Japan fully realised that [the US] were building an invasion force. We were doing an island-hopping campaign, and we were bringing to bear hundreds of thousands of troops that were going to be invading the home islands in just a short period of time, and Kyushu was the next target.

What would have happened next?
Had we invaded Kyushu, the US military did estimates of how long it would take, what the resistance would be and also the American casualties that would result from the invasion and occupation of Kyushu. And essentially 50,000 Americans would likely have died just to take Kyushu. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese would have died in that. Then what would have likely happened after that is the brute force conquest island by island of the four islands, where Honshu would probably have been next, where Tokyo is and so forth. There has been speculation ever since we dropped the bomb of what the American casualties would have been to take Honshu, and the numbers that are bandied about are like a half million Americans dead. But that's more of a guesstimate than an actual estimate, because the detailed planning for taking Honshu had not happened yet.

Would the US have dropped more atomic bombs?
Well, we only had two more, so we had a limited stockpile. We only were going to have two more bombs by December 1945. People who don't know the historical details of the case would just naturally assume, oh America could drop dozens or hundreds of atomic bombs on Japan. In fact, American opinion polls at the time when Japan surrendered [showed] that 22 or 25 per cent of Americans wanted us to keep bombing using the atomic bombs even after Japan surrendered, because we were pretty angry about Pearl Harbor. But there weren't the bombs to drop. There were two more, but it would have taken many months here to produce a large number of atomic bombs. And we had already destroyed most of the cities anyway. So, by the time we dropped the atomic bombs, half of the cities' urban areas had already been completely erased and obliterated by firebombings.

Would there have been a race to conquer Japan between the Soviet Union and the US, similar to the race to Berlin in Germany?

PEACE
210241

TOP LEFT
The US planned to conquer Japan island by island

TOP LEFT
General Anami was part of a coup to overthrow the Emperor

ABOVE
News of Japan's surrender was celebrated across Europe

A slower race, yeah. Just as we are doing amphibious landings on the home islands, the Soviets would be in a position of taking control of large parts of the Japanese-controlled mainland, and then do their own amphibious landings as well. It would've been a months-long slogging campaign, six to eight months at a minimum, to move through those four home islands. And that would've been true for either the American side or the Soviet side. And it's something that would have been a massive undertaking, because amphibious operations are just fantastically difficult to do. We had to do one giant amphibious operation in Europe, that was in Normandy at Omaha Beach. The Japanese theatre is a whole series of amphibious operation after amphibious operation.

Would we have seen a divided Japan like we saw a divided Germany?
It's possible. The risk of direct conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union would have been much more direct, because given that the Soviets would have to do amphibious operations and we have a very significant navy and naval blockade of Japan. What we would be doing as we're taking Kyushu is we would be tightening the blockade around the four home islands even tighter. And that would not only prevent any access of shipping into Japan, but it would also directly impede any possible amphibious operation by the Soviets. So I think that what you would have seen is, unlike what's happening in the race to Berlin [at] the middle of Germany, where there's no possibility of Americans shooting Soviets, I think the risk here of a confrontation with the Soviets is much more real. So rather than a divided Japan like you saw a divided West Germany and East Germany, I think it's more that there could have been more direct confrontation with the Soviets.

What impact would this have had on Europe?
The United States after the surrender of Japan could refocus a lot of its efforts on Europe, which is what we did. However, had we not, had we had to have that brute force island-by-island conquest of Japan, that would have created a real tension between dealing with Japan and then shifting over to Europe. It would have kept our focus on the Far East and it would've done that for many months, if not several years. I think that you would have had much less economic focus on Western Europe. I think this would've put at risk the Marshall Plan. It would have opened the door to much more Soviet influence in Western Europe than actually occurred. And even the whole idea that NATO would have come together in 1949, it just raises lots of questions about whether that would have actually happened. That whole giant effort to forcibly conquer the Japanese home islands would have had some pretty big reverberations in terms of the history of Europe.

THE POSSIBILITY

1945-46

ISLAND HOPPING

The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the ultimate in sending a message of superior power to the enemy. In that sense it did its job, and the resulting Japanese surrender saved a prolonged war and many more lives. But it was not a campaign. There were not stockpiles of atomic bombs waiting to be used. Two, at least for the time being, was it. Had Japan not surrendered then the planned ground invasion would have been put into operation. Except that it was not just one piece of ground to invade and capture, it was four main islands making up the core of Japan.

1945

FIGHTING OVER THE SCRAPS

Having revoked its neutrality pact with Japan, Russia could now regard itself as an open player in the Far East. Although allies of the US in Europe against Hitler, Stalin may now feel it possible to make some gains on his Eastern flank. With the US conducting amphibious landings from the East, and the Russians invading from the North and West, the potential for a misunderstanding, or even intentional engagement between the two forces would increase. In defeat, Japan could become a battleground – military or political – between two powers eager to secure their influence in the region and gain essential global kudos over their rival.

1945 ONWARDS

EUROPE COMES SECOND

A prolonged war against Japan would have had a significant impact on the resources and manpower of the Allies. By keeping troops in the field for longer the drains on domestic finances would have become substantial. Also, with a financially costly land assault on the Japanese mainland inevitable, any support given by the US to the aftermath of the war in Europe would have been minimal, as would a continued US presence there. The Soviet Union, however, may decide not to become too embroiled in the execution of Japan's defeat, choosing instead to focus on Europe and what it could gain, materially and influentially, without the overarching impact of the US in its way.

И ЗАСУХУ
ПОБЕДИМ!

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What if...

THE SOVIETS HAD INVADED JAPAN?

How might the post-war world have looked if the Soviets had pushed on into Japan?

INTERVIEW WITH

© Dayna Barnes

Dayna Barnes

An adjunct professor at The University of San Francisco, Barnes is a specialist in East Asian International History. She has a PhD and an MSc in the Theory and History of International Relations from the London School of Economics and a BA in Politics from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She is the managing editor of the electronic journal *Asia Pacific Perspectives*, which publishes articles on social sciences and humanities focusing on the Asia-Pacific region.

What would have happened if the Soviets had invaded mainland Japan in WWII?

The Soviets did invade the Kuril Islands north of Hokkaido in August of 1945. Japanese sovereignty over those islands was agreed between the Russians and the Japanese in the 19th century, and continued Russian control of these since 1945 is an issue of contention between Russia and Japan today. Had the Soviets pushed further south, they would certainly have had a larger voice in the occupation administration, perhaps having control of their own zone of occupation as in Korea and Germany. The result could have been, as in North and South Korea and East and West Germany, the creation of divided and ideologically opposed states in post-war Japan.

The post-war occupation of Korea had the unintended consequence of dividing what had been a whole nation. Korea, like Japan, was an ethnically and linguistically homogenous country, with a long national history. It was occupied by the Allies who planned to administer the occupation in zones while cooperating with each other to prepare Korea for independence. However, as the United States and the Soviet Union advocated very different types of government and economic systems, the regimes that emerged from that very brief divided occupation were very different from each other. During the occupation, both occupiers worked to support friendly governments based on their own models. This helped to create the division between North and South Korea, although both of those new countries hoped for a reunification of the peninsula. The same might have happened in Japan, with a capitalist and pro-US South Japan, which would have included major industrial and population centres like Tokyo and Osaka, and a communist pro-Soviet North Japan. Although this divide would at first be artificial, as time went on, the different governments and continuing events could have deepened the rift.

How would it have been different from the Allied occupation of Japan after the war?

This depends on how far the Soviets would have gotten moving into the home islands of Japan before the war ended. The Allied occupation was dominated by the Americans, but it was a joint project, which included the Soviets (along with the British and Chinese). These countries had a voice in the occupation administration through an advisory body called the Far Eastern Commission. As stated above, had the Soviet Union invaded large parts of the Japanese home islands, it would have had a larger voice in the occupation, perhaps having its own zone of occupation. Under the administration of very different kinds of states (capitalist and communist), the different zones would have developed in very different ways, as in North and South Korea until that occupation ended in 1948. The question of whether Japan should be administered in zones by the major Allies, or whole under the Americans, was actually not settled until July and August of 1945, so at the time the possibility of a Soviet-controlled zone in Japan would not have been surprising. Certainly the Americans and British would have wanted the zone line to be drawn to deny the Soviets control of Tokyo. Unlike Germany, where the Soviets bore the brunt of fighting, the US had provided most of

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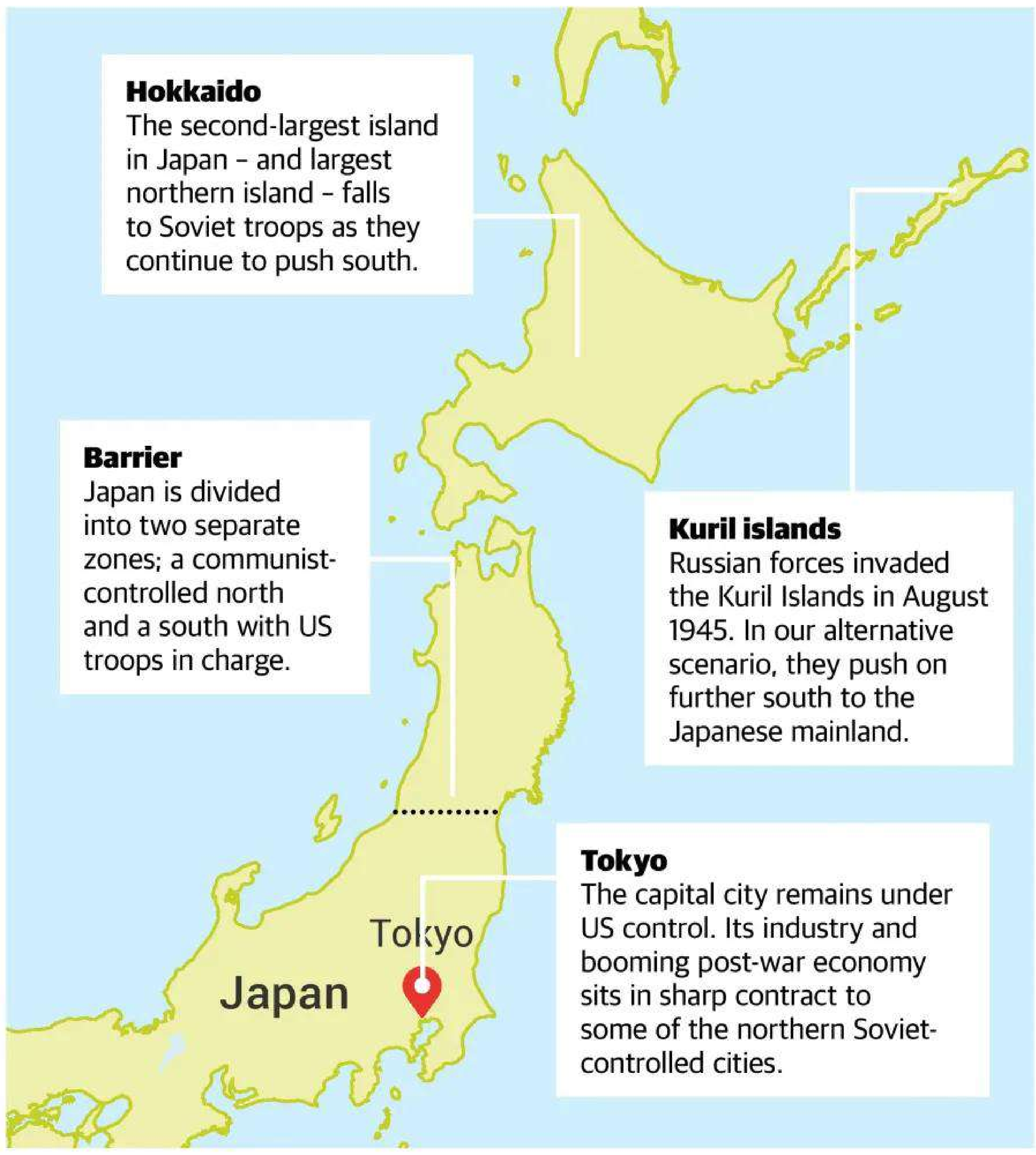
RIGHT
A group of US Marines search for enemy soldiers during fighting in Japan in WWII

> “The result could have been the creation of divided and ideologically opposed states in post-war Japan”

the force for the Pacific island-hopping campaign, which led to Japan's defeat. US officials and the public therefore expected a larger role in the post-war period.

How would the US involvement in Vietnam and Korea have changed?
This is a hard question to answer. US support for South Korea might not have changed, but it is hard to say whether North Korea would have been more or less likely to invade South Korea in an attempt to reunify the country (starting the Korean War), or whether Russia and China would have been more or less willing to support it. The same with Vietnam – perhaps the Americans would have felt over-stretched in Asia and not have gotten involved in French colonial questions, or maybe the possibility of communist spread would have seemed like an even greater threat.

What would have been the US response to the invasion?
The Soviets and Americans were allies in WWII, fighting together in the European theatre. The Soviet Union and Japan had signed a neutrality pact in 1941, so the Soviet Union wasn't involved in the Pacific theatre of the war until August 1945. However, the US had been pushing for Soviet involvement against Japan since 1942. The Roosevelt and Truman administrations both hoped the Russians could fight the Japanese army in Manchuria and help with the invasion of Japan that was planned before the successful test of the atomic bomb. While there were some dissenting voices in the US government, by and large the administration supported the idea of Russia joining the fight against Japan and becoming part of the invasion and occupation.



Hokkaido
The second-largest island in Japan – and largest northern island – falls to Soviet troops as they continue to push south.

Barrier
Japan is divided into two separate zones; a communist-controlled north and a south with US troops in charge.

Kuril islands
Russian forces invaded the Kuril Islands in August 1945. In our alternative scenario, they push on further south to the Japanese mainland.

Tokyo
The capital city remains under US control. Its industry and booming post-war economy sits in sharp contract to some of the northern Soviet-controlled cities.

Would there have been any Japanese resistance to Soviet rule?
The Allies expected substantial resistance after surrender, both to occupation on the home islands and to surrender by Japanese troops abroad. On the whole, the Allies were surprised at the level of cooperation and the fact that a major resistance did not emerge. The Russians would have faced the same challenges with occupation; a food crisis, housing and public health issues, damaged infrastructure and widespread devastation. An extended invasion before surrender would have made such problems worse.

Would the Soviets have stopped at Japan or invaded anywhere else close by?
Russia had interests in northern China (Manchuria), Korea and the Kuril Islands

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

Second Sino-Japanese War begins
Japan has been expanding into mainland Asia since 1931 and tensions with China reach a head with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as war breaks out.
July 1937

Pearl Harbor
Japan decides to launch a surprise attack on the Hawaiian US base Pearl Harbor. 2,335 servicemen die.
7 December 1941

Naval battle
The Battle of Midway, one of the most important naval battles of WWII, takes place. Japan's plan to draw the US forces into a trap fails and they suffer significant losses.
4-7 June 1942

Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
With Germany defeated, President Harry Truman orders the dropping of the atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. A second bomb is dropped on Nagasaki three days later.
6 August 1945

USSR declares war on Japan
Japan has been at war with the US and Britain since December 1941, but the USSR only officially declares war on this date. The Soviets march into Manchuria as Japan continues its retreat.
8 August 1945

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

Soviet Union invades Japan
A decision is made by the Soviet hierarchy to press on past Manchuria on the Asian mainland and an air and sea assault is followed by a landing force on Hokkaido.
20 August 1945

ABOVE
The destroyer USS Shaw on fire after being hit during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941

from the late-19th century, and invaded all of those places at the end of WWII. It did not have significant interests further south.

Would the USSR have broken up sooner due to resources being stretched or would the Iron Curtain have been strengthened?

It's difficult to say, because so many things would have been different. Certainly the occupation was a long and expensive project, and post-occupation support would have been as well. However, it is unlikely that support of or influence over Japan would have demanded more resources than other states in the communist camp did. This is especially true as Japan had the ingredients necessary for a successful post-war reconstruction, with good infrastructure and an educated population with experience in industry, finance and agriculture.

How might the USSR have benefitted from this new communist Japan?

If a communist Japan had been successful, this would have made the communist model more attractive to other states. A successful and pro-Soviet communist Japan would have increased the power of the Soviet Union, giving it more influence in East Asia and another ally in the Cold War. Japan's success would have demonstrated that the Soviet model of governance and development worked, possibly persuading other countries to adopt communism. Importantly, a Soviet-allied Japan would have denied the US one of its most important bilateral relationships in the post-war world. US military bases in Japan have been a major source of their power and influence in the region. Without this alliance, the United States would have had a smaller presence in the region, especially in light of poor relations with communist China. In the zero-sum game of the Cold War, a weaker United States would strengthen the position of the Soviet Union.

How long would Soviet rule have lasted – would they still be in charge today?

The occupation of Korea lasted from 1945 to 1948, and the Soviets supported early Korean independence. Japan's lasted until 1952, which was longer than had been expected. The occupation of Japan will likely not have lasted much longer if it was divided into zones. The Soviet Union supported a short occupation of Korea after WWII and during the war proposed containing Japan by creating 'strong points', Allied military positions surrounding the country. It is unlikely that Russia would have supported a long occupation in Japan.

Japan surrenders
Japan's surrender is accepted by US General Douglas MacArthur as WWII ends. VJ Day is on 14 August but the surrender is only made official on this day.
2 September 1945

Treaty of peace with Japan is signed
48 nations sign the Treaty of San Francisco as peace is officially secured. Allied forces eventually leave Japan in 1952, believing their political and social targets have all been achieved.
8 September 1951

Japan joins the United Nations
On this date Japan officially becomes a member of the UN as it seeks to strengthen its international identity as a peaceful nation and lessen its dependence on the US.
18 December 1956

USSR establishes own occupational zone in Japan
Buoyed by their success the Soviets believe a higher stake in Japanese affairs is wise and claim joint occupation with the rest of the Allies – a revised constitution is drawn up. **April 1947**

New Japanese constitution
A new constitution is drawn up for the nation by MacArthur, with Emperor Hirohito stripped of his power, as Allied control begins to take effect. **3 May 1947**

Chinese relations
Communist activity in the Far East makes Sino-Russo relations much smoother with friendly trade links set up between the two nations even into the Khrushchev era.
1955

Japanese prime minister visits China
Kakuei Tanaka visits Mao Tse-Tung's People's Republic of China as diplomatic relations are healthily improved between the two nations. A joint communiqué is signed in Peking (Beijing).
25-30 September 1972

Extension of Japanese rule
With the Cold War brewing, both superpowers refuse to lessen their stake in Japan and it is eventually split into a communist North and a capitalist South.
1952

Japanese resistance
With Russian rule much more brutal than by their US counterparts, the Japanese rebel in a year-long series of skirmishes that is eventually quashed by superior Russian strength. **1953**

North Korea invades the South
With the Soviets pumping resources into the country, North Korea overpowers the South and the peninsula becomes one. Soviet power is extended once again. **1954**

USSR breaks up
The over-stretching of resources in the Far East leads to an early break-up of the Soviet Union. Japan is returned to Allied rule and joins the UN as it attempts to rebuild international relations. **1971**

Cold War ends
The Cold War ends between a now-reeling Russia and a dominant USA. The US leaves Japan, the wall dividing the country is broken up and Japan is united as one.
1972

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What if...

STALIN HAD CONTINUED WEST AFTER BERLIN?

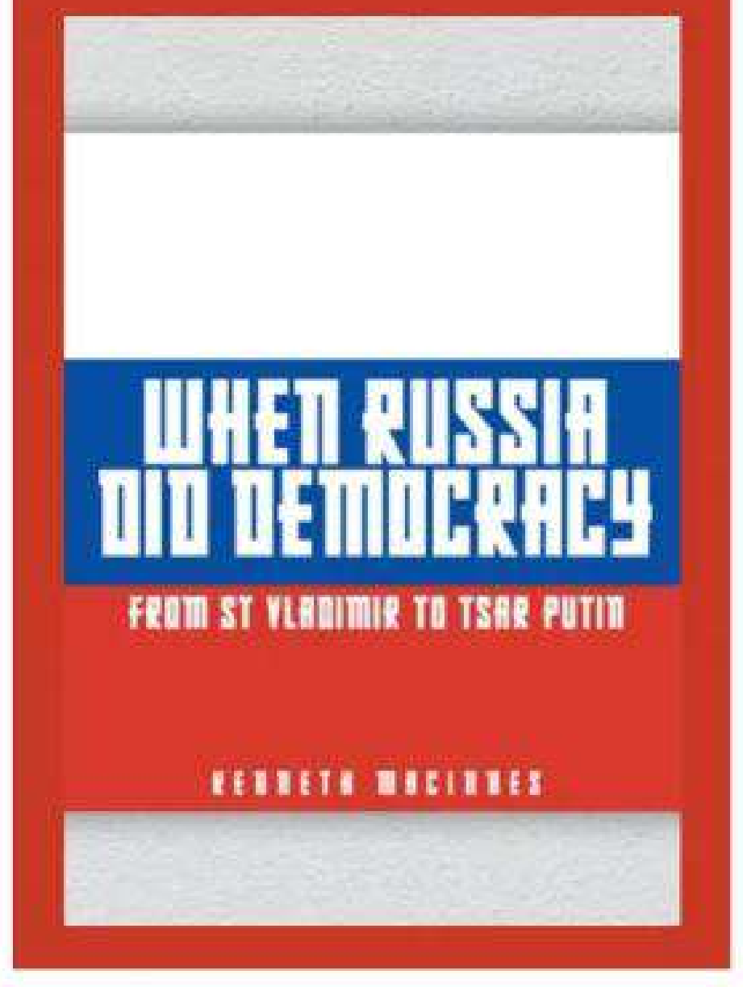
Having used the Allies for his own ends, Stalin plots to overthrow the rest of Europe

INTERVIEW WITH

© K MacInnes

Kenneth MacInnes

Kenneth lived in Russia under Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin. He worked at the State Russian Museum and later for the UK Parliament. He is the author of *When Russia Did Democracy* (Amberley, 2023).



WHEN RUSSIA DID DEMOCRACY

FROM ST VLADIMIR TO TSAR PUTIN

KENNETH MACINNES

In February 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin meet at Yalta. The resurgence of the Soviet war machine following such heavy losses – and almost defeat – against the Nazis, had played its part in Hitler's eventual downfall. Their prize, conceded to them by the Allies, was Eastern Europe. But out of collaboration and alliance was to emerge mutual distrust, rivalry, and the uneasy stand-off of the Cold War. Stalin was perhaps not as satisfied with the arrangement as he seemed to appear. He had made gains, but he was not a dog to be fed scraps by the West. It was the destiny of the world to be socialist, and his destiny to make it happen. So how could he achieve it?

At what point would such a move by Stalin have potentially been the most successful?

In 1945, Stalin had 12 million men in uniform and occupied half of Europe. But his armies were exhausted and, like the rest of Soviet society, not psychologically ready for an attack on their former Allies. Stalin needed to restore the pre-war levels of terror and paranoia before he could go to war again.

The USSR did not become a nuclear power until 1949, although Stalin did not so much fear American unipolarity as the ability of the USA to totally destroy the USSR in an atomic war. By Soviet calculations, based on information supplied by Klaus Fuchs and Donald Maclean, the West would only have enough missiles in 1955.

Stalin described his personal philosophy to the Bulgarian and Yugoslavian leaders in 1948: "The whole question lies in the balance of power... We strike not when the enemy wants it, but when it is in our interests". Writing to Mao in October 1950, he reckoned that "the USA, as Korean events have shown, is not ready at present for a big war" and "together we are stronger than the USA and England".

Three months later, in January 1951, Stalin held a Kremlin summit with the communist leaders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. The five satellite countries were given three years to raise a combined army of three million men for a Soviet-led attack on Western Europe. So, the best time would have been around 1954 – particularly now the USA was engaged in Korea and had more troops in Asia than in Europe.

What would Stalin's main motivations have been for such a move to happen?

Like all dictators ruling long and unchallenged, Stalin was a megalomaniac. Post-war Soviet films – *The Vow* (1946) and *The Fall of Berlin* (1950) – betray the former seminarian's messiah complex. He saw his relationship with Lenin not as 'disciple' but more like Jesus Christ to John the Baptist. A move against the West would see Stalin continue Lenin's work – except that he would succeed.

RIGHT Soviet troops could quickly push even further into Europe

Images: © Alamy, Getty Images

What if…

STALIN HAD CONTINUED WEST AFTER BERLIN?

THE PAST

1942-43

BREAKING OUT

The turning point that was the Battle of Stalingrad has become etched into the very DNA of the Russian people. It is this pivotal conflict that was to give the Soviet forces and the Russian civilians the will to dig deep and drive the Nazis from their lands. The counteroffensive, and subsequent German surrender, was the start of a huge push westward towards Germany itself. In July 1943, the Soviets repelled a massive German tank attack at Kursk before embarking on their own offensive. By November they liberate Kiev.

1944

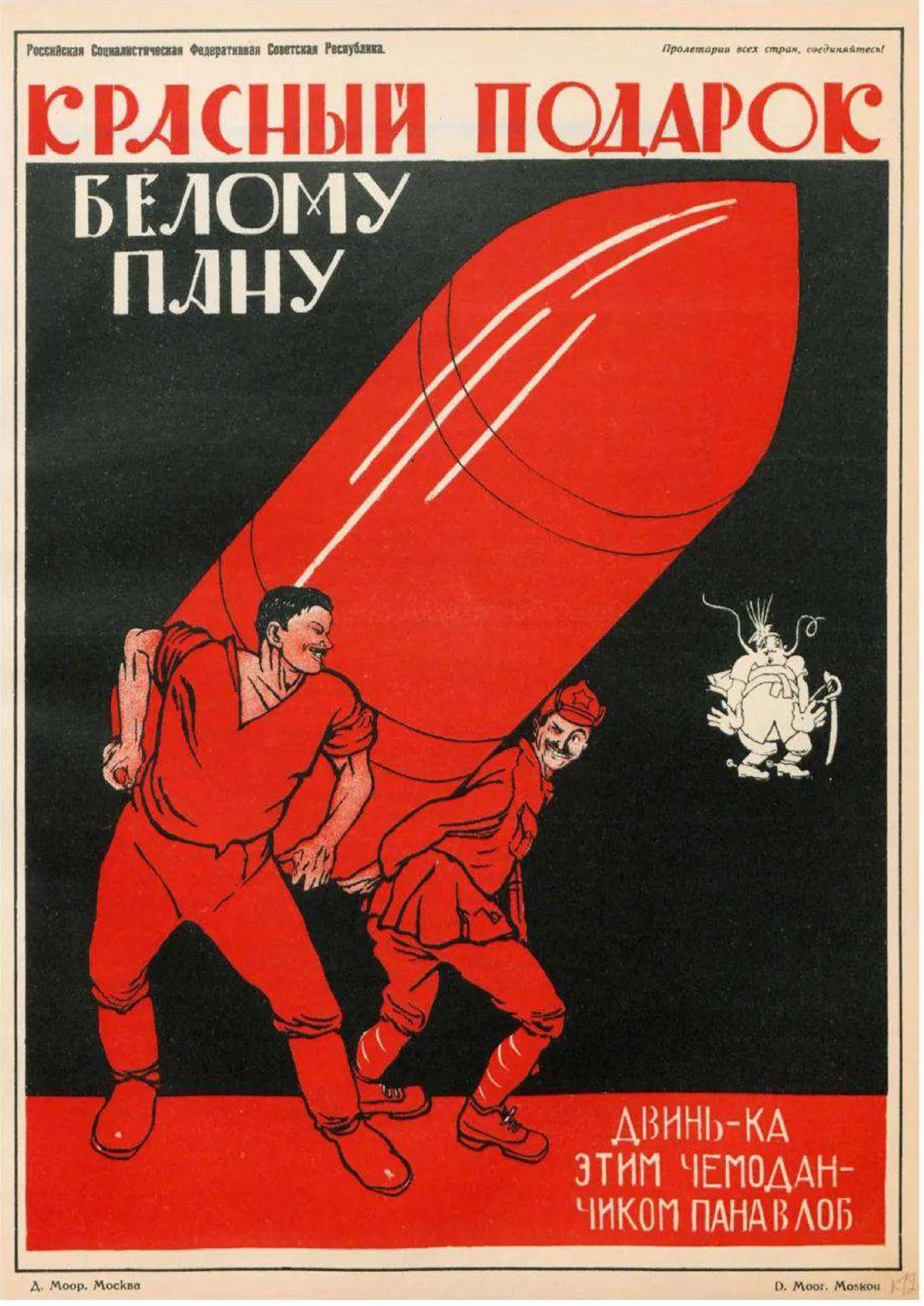
GATHERING PACE

In June a massive Soviet offensive destroys the German army in eastern Belarus before advancing towards Poland. The advance halts on the east bank of the Vistula river. Polish resistance rises up against the Germans to try and liberate Warsaw, but eventually they are forced to surrender to the Germans. By August, Allied troops reach Paris, by September the German border, and by December virtually all of France, most of Belgium and southern Netherlands are liberated. With the arrival of Soviet troops, the Romanian opposition manages to overthrow the regime.

1945

RACE TO THE FINISH

By April 1945 the Battle for Berlin had begun. By now the defence of the city included old men and young boys, many of them decorated personally by Hitler for their bravery. The Soviet troops hunted for the Führer, while the brutal street fighting laid to ruin one of Europe's most beautiful and sophisticated cities. Hitler did not sacrifice himself for his people as he had vowed to do, and the radio propaganda that stated he had fallen in battle perpetuated the lie. By the time the fighting stopped, some 300,00 Berliners and 80,000 Red Army soldiers were dead. At the Yalta Conference Stalin acquired part of Berlin, Germany, and Eastern Europe. The Iron Curtain was draped across Europe, and the Cold War began.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ABOVE Weapons came to be at the heart of Russian propaganda

BELOW The Soviet War Memorial to their fallen troops at Tiergarten, Berlin

As Stalin explained shortly after 1945, WWI gave rise to the first communist state. The next war created several. Following this logic, a third world war could see the whole planet turn socialist, just like on the state emblem (a hammer and sickle covering the globe). But while Lenin thought that revolutions would occur spontaneously in Europe, recent events showed Stalin that communism could only be introduced through invasion and occupation.

Stalin regarded himself as more of a 'tsar' than a 'commissar'. He considered Ivan the Terrible his 'teacher' and pursued the same expansionist policies as Peter and Catherine the Great. In the 1930s, the Comintern became a useful tool for advancing Russia's foreign-policy objectives and, in the 1940s, Stalin increasingly replaced the word 'Soviet' with 'Russian' in toasts and speeches.

In one of his last conversations before he died in 1953, Stalin warned a bodyguard about the USA: "They will attack us, they're imperialists, and they certainly will attack us. If we let them." Ultimately, Stalin had always thought that war with America was inevitable. As historian Alexander Gogut points out, he had been saying this since 1919.

What would be Stalin's plan and the likelihood of success?

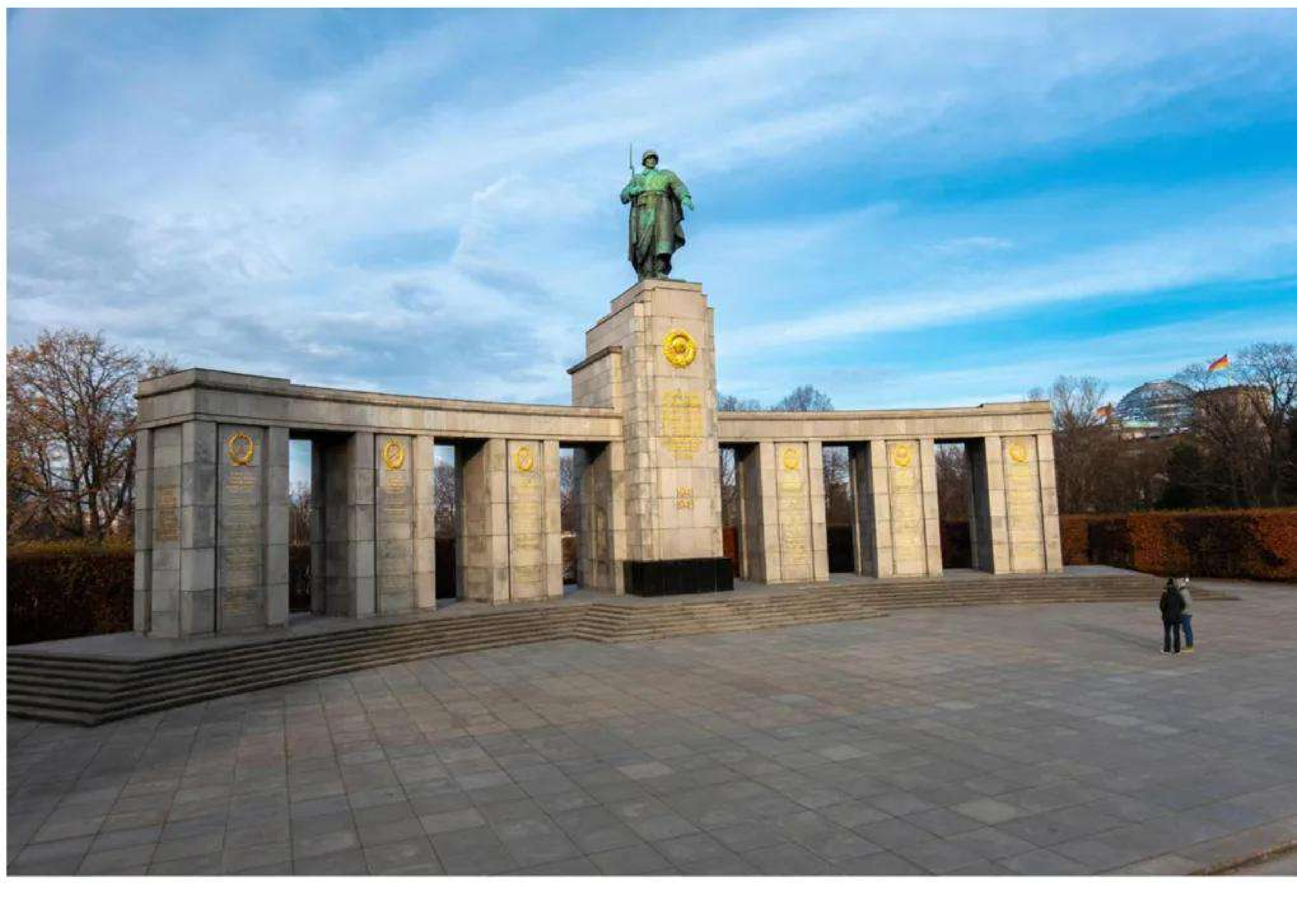
Judging by accounts later published by participants of the 1951 summit, Stalin planned a 'Blitzkrieg' to capture the whole of Western Europe in a couple of weeks. Polish forces would take Denmark, while the Czechoslovaks would push through southern Germany into France. Russian troops would doubtlessly get the prestigious task of entering Paris (as in 1814). Stalin also counted on support from communist parties inside some countries, such as France and Italy.

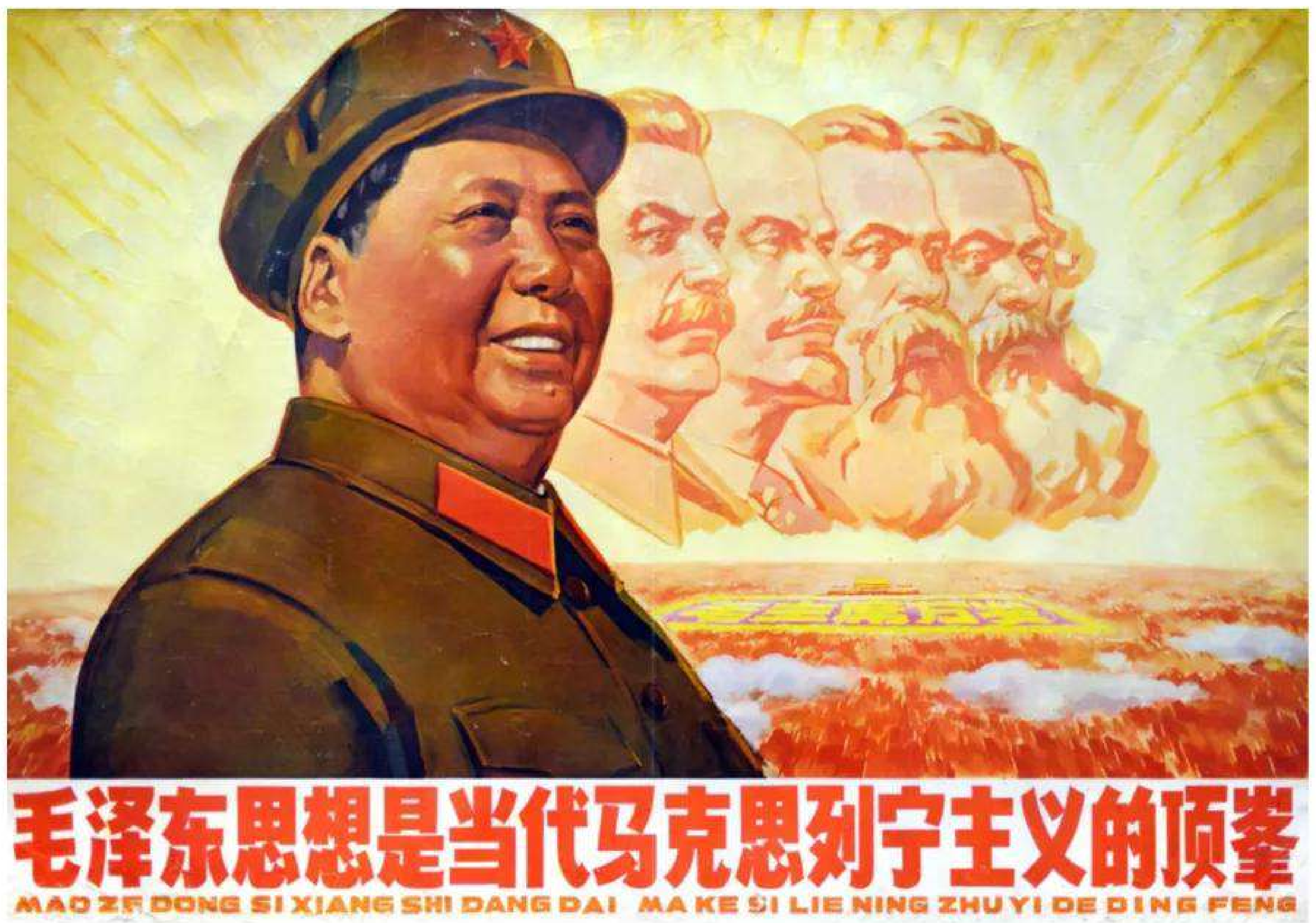
After securing the Eastern Hemisphere – Britain would have been subjected to aerial bombardment – the second stage would be attacks on the United States, either via the North Pole or by launching missiles against coastal cities (one idea was to fire thermonuclear torpedoes from Soviet submarines). A nuclear strike followed by an invasion was a real possibility; this was wargamed in 1954 at Totskoye with 45,000 soldiers, 600 tanks and 300 planes.

The likelihood of success was quite high – if Stalin had struck in the early 1950s and employed tactical nuclear weapons (he had killed more of his own citizens than the USA could in a retaliatory attack). The memorandum of a US Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting in January 1951 echoes his own analysis: "The Soviet Union has the capability of overrunning Western Europe at any time during the next two or three years… If war comes during this period, though we would probably not lose it, we would have a difficult time winning it".

How might the aftermath of a Soviet victory have looked?

Events in an occupied Western Europe would have mirrored the history of Eastern Europe after 1945. There would

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> "There would have been no limits on Stalin's dreams of conquest… his goal was a 'worldwide Soviet Union'"

have been hasty 'elections' to appoint new governments. For example, only a month after Soviet forces entered east Poland in September 1939, ballots were held for the People's Assembly of Western Ukraine. The turnout was increased by giving Red Army soldiers the vote and forcibly marching voters to polling stations (one woman from Lviv was "taken from home dressed only in slippers and a bathrobe"). The official figures reported a (clearly false) turnout of 93 per cent with 91 per cent voting for the communist candidates.

Coalition governments may have initially been elected in several West European countries, as in Czechoslovakia in 1946, with the key portfolios going to communists – and the non-communists simply ignored, sidelined, or ousted. A string of 'people's democracies' would have been established with membership of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact (not the EU or NATO). Stalinist methods would be used to crush any remaining opposition in other parties, religious organisations, and private institutions.

What would have been the limits to Stalin's ambitions?

There would have been literally no limits on Stalin's dreams of world conquest. His ultimate goal was a 'worldwide Soviet Union'. If his plan had succeeded, he would have occupied the whole continent of Europe, while his communist allies in China, Korea and Vietnam would control much of Asia.

ABOVE
Chairman Mao would stand with Stalin against the West

Stalin unexpectedly published an article on linguistics in 1950, possibly thinking of the day when the Russian language would become the world's main lingua franca. Likewise, following a Western defeat, the rouble and not the dollar would have become the world's reserve currency.

A Soviet victory in a third world war – or, at least, VE Day II – would have culminated in the world's largest parade in Moscow. The most prominent place would be given to Stalin – unlike in the victory parade of 1945, when Marshal Zhukov rode a white horse across Red Square. This was a role allegedly intended for Stalin until he fell off his horse while practising at a parade ground (Zhukov was shortly afterwards demoted and accused of the unauthorised looting of war booty).

Is there anyone who could have stopped Stalin?

Opposition may have arisen within the ranks of the East Europeans. The establishment of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 legitimised the use of their troops in a Soviet-led war. There was now a single command with all decisions made by the Soviet staff and the sole representatives of the satellite states reduced to liaison officers. As these countries were more vulnerable than the USSR to Western bombing raids and Soviet battle plans exposed their armies to greater danger, there was a chance of either a revolt or an unwillingness to fight.

Soviet political and military leaders would have feared becoming victims in the purges – which would inevitably have preceded a war, like in the late 1930s – as Stalin took measures to ensure his own unassailability. In 1949, he began replacing his inner circle (Molotov, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan). The prospect of losing their ministerial posts – or their heads – may have encouraged them to overthrow Stalin (the same reasons given for the coup against Gorbachev in 1991).

Perhaps someone did act? Colonel Grigori Tokaty defected in 1947 after attending an 'underground conference' of anti-Stalinists, which discussed "the peril of a new war, and the part to be played by the opposition groups if war materialised". He described the existence of "an underground Jewish group with its headquarters in Central Russia" – and Stalin died on the very day when, according to rumours, "the Jews would be loaded onto trucks" and deported to Siberia as a prelude to war.

THE POSSIBILITY

1949 ONWARDS

EAST IS EAST AND WEST IS WEST

As communist states, the alliance between the Soviet Union and China against the West was a strong hand for Stalin. He continued to pursue his vision of Russia as a nuclear power, and assisted his new partner to do the same. With the Americans and British already nuclear-ready, the pursuit of more territory in Europe by Stalin, and the possibility of any conflict arising from it, would bring at least localised European nuclear war to the brink, and may even spread to Asia as China took the opportunity to cement its own dominance over its neighbours, supported by a Soviet Union that spans the continents. Stalin's dream of a socialist world would not be far away.

1946 ONWARDS

RUSSIAN SATELLITES

Having secured Soviet influence across Europe through annexation and invasion, Stalin would look to build a far broader and larger version of what became known in history as the 'Eastern Bloc'. By reaching far deeper into Europe, and tapping into the socialist support within existing nations, Stalin would oversee the establishment of communist dictatorship throughout continental Europe with the 'democratic people's republics' of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. United in their policies and doctrine they would be universally, and unconditionally, bound in a Cold War against Great Britain and the United States.

1950s

OUT OF THE ASHES

With the brutality of his regime Stalin had triggered fear and resentment in those close to him. It is possible that some of them may have found the courage and the backing to act against the dictator. A successful assassination, or even attempted coup, may trigger an uprising among satellite states that had been robbed of their sovereignty, and even their right to decide on war or peace. Once again Europe would be in desperate, and dangerous, turmoil. But in time this may lead to a new liberal order in the USSR and freedom for Eastern Europe in the 1950s.

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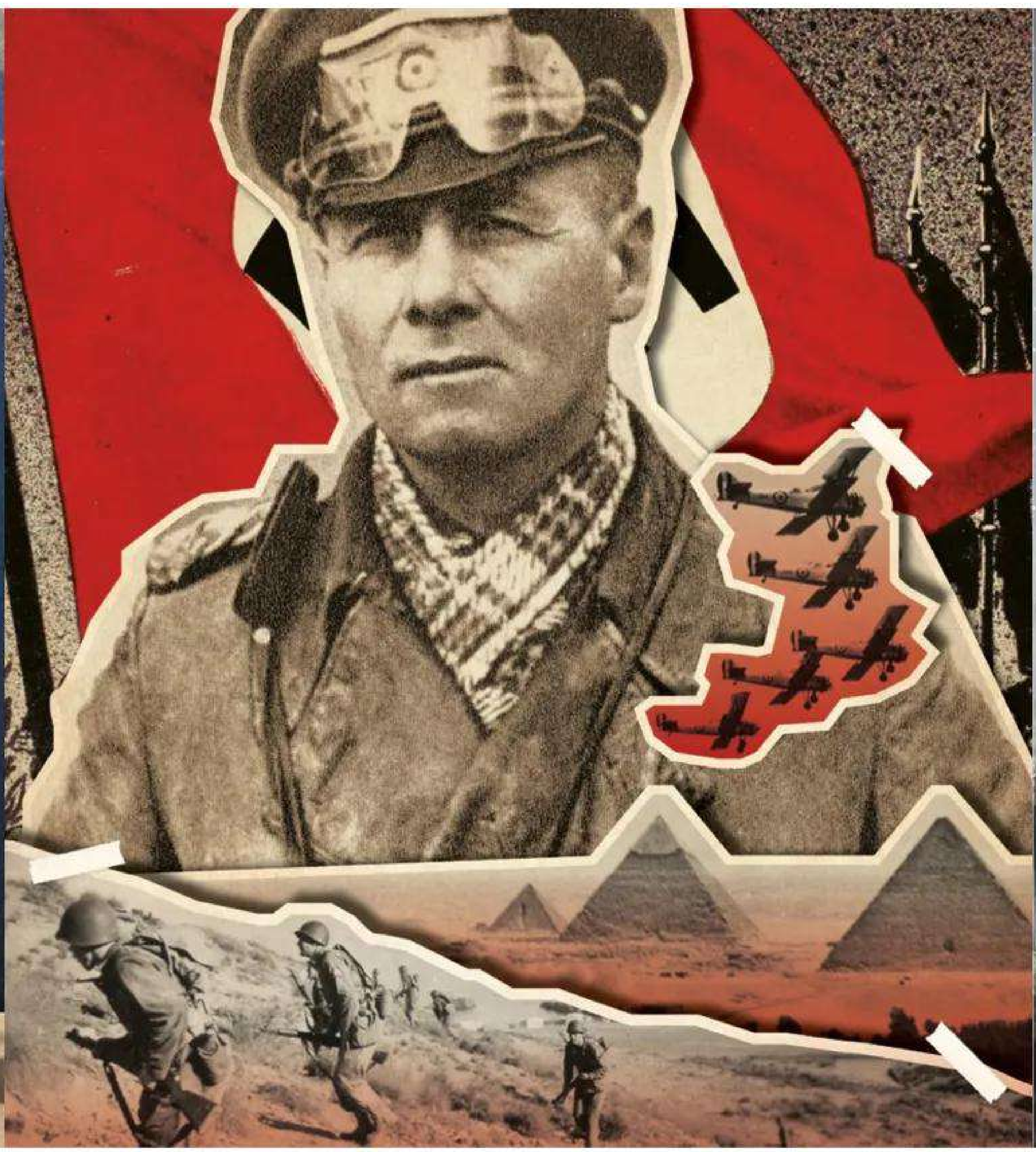

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How key events could have changed the course of the world's bloodiest conflict

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THE RAF LOST THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN?

The possible consequences of Britain's aerial defeat in 1940 have fascinated historians and perplexed military strategists for decades

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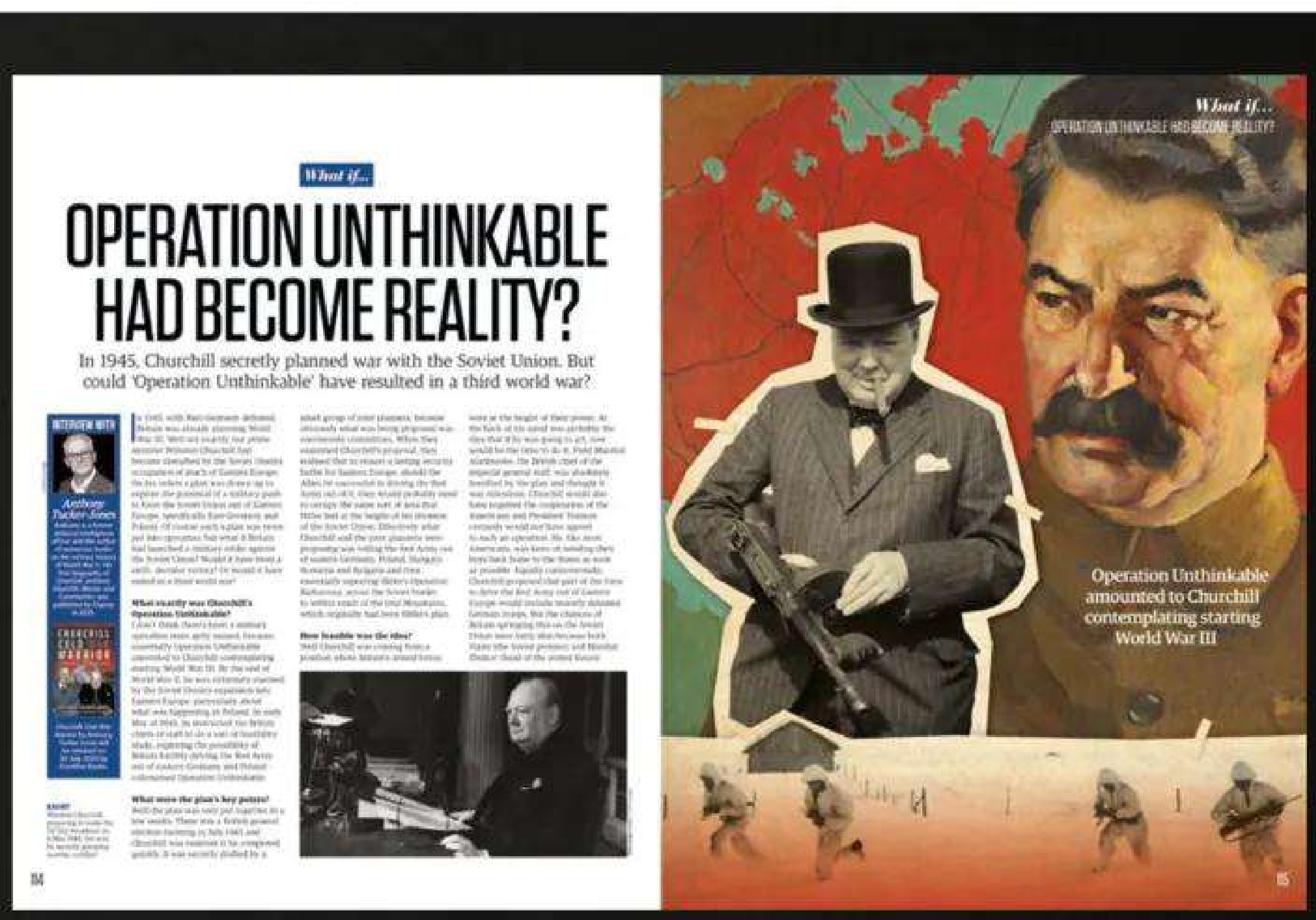
THE ALLIES HAD LOST THE WAR?

Imagine if Hitler succeeded with his dream of turning Europe into a single Nazi superpower...



What if...

OPERATION UNTHINKABLE HAD BECOME REALITY?

In 1945, Churchill secretly planned war with the Soviet Union. But could 'Operation Unthinkable' have resulted in a third world war?

Operation Unthinkable amounted to Churchill contemplating starting World War III

Allied Failure

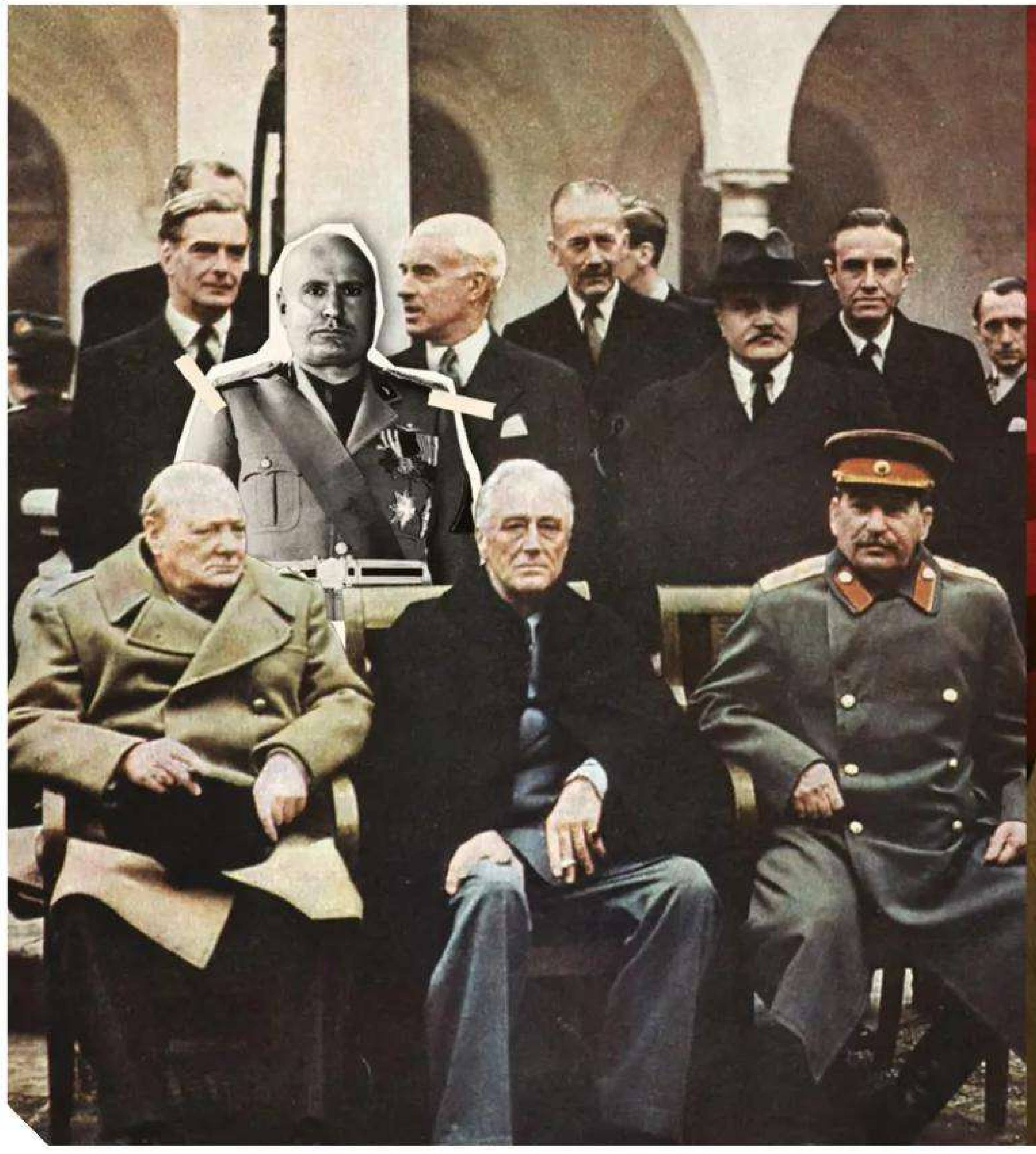
What would Allied defeat in Normandy or North Africa have meant for the outcome of the war?

Axis Victory

What would the impact of a successful Nazi invasion of Britain or victory at Stalingrad have been?

Post-War Events

How would the post-war world have looked if Stalin continued his expansion westwards or Hitler had lived?



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